

INSIDE:

The family business of  
Zebec Water Sports  
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Digital Edition



This year's World Waterpark Association's WWA40 Virtual will look very different than 2019's annual symposium and trade show (above), however the hope is that the replacement virtual show's networking opportunities will come as close as possible in bringing water park professionals together. WWA is offering a tiered sponsorship opportunity for members. AT/PAM SHERBORNE

## WWA40 Virtual features over 50 hours of planned programming

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — When officials of the **World Waterpark Association (WWA)** announced on August 10 they had canceled the in-person 40th **WWA Annual Symposium and Trade Show**, it really came as no surprise to many. The challenges and the ever-changing protocols and mandates created by the COVID-19 global pandemic was continuing to cause a lot of disruptions and confusion.

Of course, that didn't stop anyone in the water park industry from being disappointed that they wouldn't be meeting together in Las Vegas, Nevada, this year. But as WWA members have been doing all year long, they came together and quickly pivoted to the next stage. For the WWA, that was going forward to deliver a virtual show experience honoring the strong commitment to providing exceptional educa-

tion networking opportunities.

Those efforts will be on full display Tuesday-Thursday, Oct. 6-8, with the presentation of 50 hours of engaging industry experts and peers, all of whom have a story to tell about 2020 and beyond.

When making the announcement of the cancellation of the in-person event, **Damien Latham**, chair, WWA Board of Directors, and **Rick Root**, WWA president, expressed their admiration and respect for how WWA members had come together throughout 2020 to develop and share some solutions.

"In many respects, changing to a virtual show experience has been an exciting new challenge that we couldn't have anticipated but we're pleased to meet," said **Aleatha Ezra**, director of park member development. "Thanks to the incredible support we've seen so far from our sponsors, speakers and committee volunteers, we are moving ahead



with an education program that is very similar to what we would have offered in Vegas."

Over the three days of the program, WWA will provide attendees access to seven featured presentations, nine "Ask the Experts" question and answer sessions, 10 "Connect and Chat" sessions and three general sessions and award presentations. All of these will be live.

In addition, there will be 40-plus break-out sessions running concurrently over the three days.

"We'll miss our in-person networking time, of course, but now is the time for us to set a new game plan for the coming year," Ezra said. "The year 2021 will hold many unknowns for all of us, but we

don't have to go into it alone. We can bounce ideas off each other and gather new ways to operate more safely so that our guests feel good about coming back out to visit our parks."

Instead of optioning for a virtual trade show, WWA is offering sponsorship opportunities and some of the benefits for those that participate expand outside of the actual event, such as enhancing exposure for months to come.

"We did consider a virtual trade show, but we ultimately decided it wasn't the best fit for our attendees this year," Ezra said. "We are seeing incredibly strong support from our show sponsors, as they are as committed as we are to continuing our tradition of bringing the industry together to share new ideas and re-energize for the coming year."

The sponsorships are tiered with the Platinum Sponsor at the top. For \$7,500, the Platinum Sponsor package includes an inclusion on

WWA's social media sites and exclusive recognition and reference to the sponsor's company name, handle and link to the sponsor's website.

The top tier sponsor also will be included in the WWA Member Spotlight printed in the October/November or December issue of the WWA's trade publication and an upgrade to a full page message from the CEO featured in the December issue. They also will receive a main logo digital magazine launch package for October/November, December or January 2021 issue.

And that is just some of the special benefits. The Platinum Sponsor also will receive most of the benefits of the lower tiers, which are the Gold Sponsor, Silver Sponsor and the Bronze Sponsor.

The virtual event will include the announcement of WWA's annual awards, including the Hall of Fame inductees

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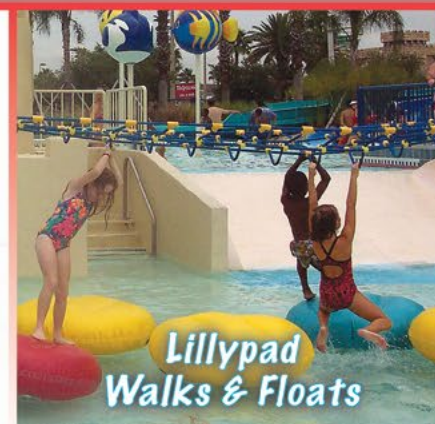


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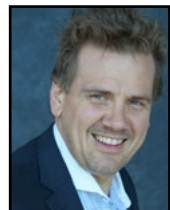




# AMUSEMENT VIEWS

**AT NOTEBOOK:** John W.C. Robinson, [jrobinson@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jrobinson@amusementtoday.com)

## Grim-grinning guests



Robinson

October was all about masks long before COVID-19 started wreaking havoc on the world around us. For the past couple of decades in the amusement industry, October has been about an added revenue stream. It was a way to extend the season past its typical end at the close of summer.

A few frights, a few pumpkins and an adjustment to evening-only hours was seemingly all it took to keep the turnstiles turning throughout October.

The current pandemic has had October's activities for all in question for quite some time. Halloween fans have been eager to enjoy their favorite holiday on an actual weekend and under a full moon. Kids have been wondering if trick-or-treat would even be happening for them. Also, as parks that struggled to first open and then have viable and steady attendance during the summer, they soon wondered what Halloween events would look like, how they would be handled and would the guests turn out for them.

As this industry is prone to do like no other, it got creative to help answer those questions. Scare actors in haunts have decorated their protective facemasks to blend perfectly with their haunt makeup and persona. Parks have adjusted their normal terror-filled events to take on a more family-oriented nature, giving kids a safe place to trick-or-treat.

A local haunted theme park needed a new attraction to help market the facility in 2020, but didn't want to risk the investment — or manpower — to create an all-new haunted maze. So, it dipped into amusement industry history and resurrected a portable carnival dark ride attraction that was more than 60 years old. The park has a new and unique draw, its midway has a new spectacle and a classic attraction has a new life.

It's too early in the season to know if all of these efforts will bring treats to the attraction industry — helping to sweeten the end of 2020 — or if all of the tricks will still result in quieter front gates. However, if the spooky decorations beginning to appear on lawns across U.S. neighborhoods and the lines at local haunted houses extend into the night are any indication, the frights of Fall 2020 may help more of the attractions industry return from the grave.

**FLINT'S VIEW:** Bubba Flint



**INDUSTRY VOICE:** Damien Latham, Chair, WWA Board of Directors

## How will you reset your playbook?

This year, each of us in the water leisure industry has been adapting to the challenges beset upon us as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the globe, I have watched how operators and suppliers have navigated through these uncharted waters. Above all, what has struck me more than anything is the relentless approach our industry has shown in getting the "show" back on the road in a manner that has safety as the number one priority.

Now, as we look toward the future of our industry, it is becoming increasingly clear that 2021 will be a year where our standard business model will have to be recalibrated. We will need to rewrite parts of our playbook in order to succeed going forward. Whatever has been our usual approach to operations, hiring, revenue generation, etc., will need to be evaluated and new tactics and strategies will likely need to be employed.

Throughout 2020, the World Waterpark Association's strategy has been to provide our members with detailed, factual information that they can use to make the best decisions for



Latham

their teams, their guests and their businesses — now and in the future. We have been leveraging the power of our global network to keep the critical stream of information going out to our members on topics that matter from safety to operations to guest engagement.

We are continuing our focus on being the best resource we can to our members as we work toward executing the WWA40 Virtual Show, the first time in 40 years when we won't come together in person to learn from and network with each other. We've said it before, but setting aside time to get together at the WWA40 Virtual Show is as important now as it has ever been. The clock is already running to set a new game plan for 2021 and how we are going to rebuild positive perceptions within our guests to help them feel safe to come out to waterparks next season.

I look forward to seeing you virtually and helping you connect the dots between where we are now and where we want to end up in the coming months.

*Opinions expressed on this page are those of the columnist(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.*



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# 2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Brad Donati, Raging Waves Waterpark



Brad Donati celebrates Raging Waves Waterpark's 2018 WWA Wave Review Award for "Best Promotion." COURTESY RAGING WAVES WATERPARK

**Brad Donati** started at **Raging Waves**, the largest water park in Illinois, as an intern and is now the marketing manager — a job well-suited for his zest of promoting fun. He loves going to work every day wondering what the day may bring and mingling with the guests and team members. Brad loves to talk — to anyone — and has a real passion for music; he even plays the trumpet!

**Title:** Marketing Manager.

**Number of years in the industry:** 8 years.

**Best thing about the industry:**  
The rides of course!

**Favorite amusement ride:**  
Raging Bull at Six Flags Great America.

**If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ...**  
A high school band teacher.

**Biggest challenge facing our industry:**  
This thing called COVID...have you heard of it?

**The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ...**  
That every day is a new adventure at the park.

**All-time favorite sitcom:**  
*How I Met Your Mother*.

**Cooler Superhero:** Spider-Man.

**It's October!**  
**My favorite Halloween candy is ...**  
Sour Patch Kids.

**My first car was ...**  
My grandma's Nissan Altima.

**Favorite "chain" restaurant:**  
Buffalo Wild Wings.

**In one word, my office is ...**  
Organized (The most organized compared to my other managers ... wink, wink).

**People say I do this a lot:**  
Talk ... and talk ... and talk.

**When I am in a hurry, I fix this for dinner:**  
Frozen pizza.

**My favorite thing about the fall season is ...**  
Apple cider donuts.

**In a meeting, I like to ...**  
Be the presenter/talker!

**My "feel-good" song is ...**  
"Love on Top" by Beyonce.

**The last thing I lost was ...**  
A computer hard drive!

**If money were no object, I would buy a second home here:**  
Cinque Terre, Italy.

**Are you a steak or seafood kind of guy?**  
Steak!

**Best place I have ever watched a sunset:**  
On a cruise in the Caribbean!

**The household chore I enjoy doing the most is ...**  
The dishes.

**The last movie I watched was ...**  
*Palm Springs* on Hulu.

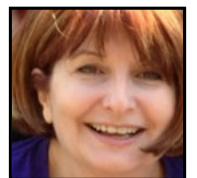
## THE INDUSTRY SEEN

### Facing fears at Six Flags



ARLINGTON, Texas — Leighton Parker (left), daughter of Public Relations Manager Sharon Parker, explores the all new Mystic Acres Trick-or-Treat Trail at Six Flags Over Texas. In an effort to bring more family-friendly fun during the daytime hours, the park was excited to bring this idea to fruition. Leighton, 7, who was brave enough to explore the HallowFest event for the first time, used that courage to later take her first spin on the double-looping Shock Wave. COURTESY SHARON PARKER/SIX FLAGS OVER TEXAS

## Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

### A no-'ring' circus wheel deal

*This issue's story comes courtesy of Patty Sullivan, president and CEO of Eli Bridge Co., whose great grandparents founded the company. Enjoy!*

After establishing their Ferris wheel manufacturing operation in Roodhouse, Illinois, in 1900, **William E. and Julie Lou Sullivan** sold their signature product, the Big Eli Wheel, to many circuses that traveled the country. Circus owners knew that the high-visibility ride would draw bigger crowds.

One circus owner had no money for the down payment on a wheel. Instead, he offered the Sullivans a percentage ownership stake in his three elephants, Elsie, Margaret and Rubber, to purchase the ride. The elephants were quite special; Rubber, in fact, was like a family pet and came running when her name was called.

Mr. Sullivan declined the offer initially, but his wife welcomed the deal — and helped seal it — because she wanted her husband to continue making and selling wheels.

The circus traveled by train, and at some point, unbeknownst to Mrs. Sullivan, the circus train derailed — allowing the elephants to escape and ravage nearby gardens for a period of time. After their recapture, the percentage payments to Mrs. Sullivan quickly resumed and eventually the wheel was paid off.

The transaction happened with minimal paperwork, a handshake and — blessedly, in view of elephants' temporary escape — not a single check-in call from the Sullivans. For this circus, it was one "ring" that was not missed.

*Lottie Minick is a 46-year attractions industry veteran and co-owner of Dallas-based Minick Associates, a design firm founded by her late husband, Bob. Her monthly column features behind-the-scenes anecdotes of her own and from those who have worked in the business. Got a fun industry story? Email [lottie@minickassociates.com](mailto:lottie@minickassociates.com).*



## WWA40 Virtual Show schedule of events

### Tuesday, Oct. 6

- 10–10:15 a.m., Welcome
- 10:15–11 a.m., Turning The Page: Innovative Park Renovations
- 10:15–11 a.m., Legal FAQ's: What Operators Want To Know
- 10:15–11 a.m., To Protect And Perform
- 10:15–11 a.m., 30 Marketing Tips In 40 Minutes
- 11–11:45 a.m., Featured Presentation: What Medical Experts Can Tell Us About Waterpark Operations In 2021
- 12 noon–12:30 p.m., General Session Featuring Hall Of Fame And Board Awards
- 12:30–1:15 p.m., Featured Presentation: State Of The Industry & Trends For 2021
  - 1:30–2 p.m., Ask The Experts: Renovating & Adding Attractions
  - 1:30–2 p.m., Ask The Experts: Food & Beverage
  - 1:30–2 p.m., Ask The Experts: Dealing With Water Quality Issues
- 2–2:45 p.m., Staying Safe In 2021: A Review Of Lifeguard And Facility Assessment Results
- 2–2:45 p.m., The Call Of The Consumer, COVID-19 Travel & Attraction Research Update
- 2–2:45 p.m., Bigger! Better! Best! The Evolution Of Next-Level Attractions
- 3–3:30 p.m., Connect & Chat: Group Sales
- 3–3:30 p.m., Connect & Chat: Lifeguard Training
- 3–3:30 p.m., Connect & Chat: Public Sector
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., Industry Safety Trends
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., Use Of Technology For Hiring, Onboarding & Staffing Management
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., Don't Go Bananas For Marketing
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., Retractable Roofs: The Best Investment In Aquatics
- 4:15–5 p.m., Preventing Recreational Water Illnesses And Operating A Public Pool During COVID-19
- 4:15–5 p.m., Leveraging Your Data – Take Advantage Of What You Have For More Sales
- 4:15–5 p.m., I Will Steal \$250,000 From You: Preventing Embezzlement

### Wednesday, Oct. 7

- 10–10:15 a.m., Morning Greeting
- 10:15–11 a.m., Maximizing PPP Loan Forgiveness
- 10:15–11 a.m., Behind The Counters: What's Lurking In Your Concession Stands?
- 10:15–11 a.m., Simple Tips For A Safer Best Day Ever At Your Park
- 10:15–11 a.m., Thinking Of A New Attraction? We Have Some Questions...
- 11–11:45 a.m., Featured Presentation: Marketing 2020 – What In The World Happened & What's Next In 2021?
- 12 noon–12:30 p.m., General Session Featuring Leading Edge Awards
- 12:30–1:15 p.m., Featured Presentation: WOW! Service Excellence Revelations
- 1:30–2 p.m., Connect & Chat: Lifeguard Training
- 1:30–2 p.m., Connect & Chat: Waterpark Resort Operations
- 1:30–2 p.m., Connect & Chat: Social Media
- 2–2:45 p.m., Featured Presentation: Make Your Mark: Leadership & Life Lessons
- 3–3:30 p.m., Ask The Experts: Drowning Prevention

- 3–3:30 p.m., Ask The Experts: Sales, Admissions & POS Software
- 3–3:30 p.m., Ask The Experts: Legal Issues
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., Waterparks And COVID-19: What Worked, What Didn't, What's Still Unknown?
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., A Neuro-Scientific Approach To Happiness At Attractions
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., Reviving Work Ethic In A Post-COVID World
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., How To Recharge Your Group Sales Game Plan
- 4:15–5 p.m., A Day In The Life Of A Waterpark Operator
- 4:15–5 p.m., Managing Indoor Air Quality
- 4:15–5 p.m., Why Are You Here? Finding Your Passion And Purpose Every Day!
- 5–5:45 p.m., 10 Ways To Increase Your Seasonal Staff Retention Rate
- 5–5:45 p.m., MAHC Change Requests 2020: "Vote On The Code" Preview
- 5–5:45 p.m., Influencer Marketing & Your Brand: How To Maximize This Strategy In 2021

### Thursday, Oct. 8

- 10–10:15 a.m., Morning Greeting
- 10:15–11 a.m., Records Management And Retention In The Electronic Era
- 10:15–11 a.m., Behind The Scenes Of Royal Caribbean's Game-Changing Island Waterpark
- 10:15–11 a.m., Lessons From Asia: How COVID Experiences Can Help Perspectives & Best Practices Around The Globe
- 10:15–11 a.m., The New Norm: Your Marketing Plan Post COVID-19
- 11–11:45 a.m., Featured Presentation: Building & Maintaining A Positive Team Culture During Difficult Times
- 12 noon–12:30 p.m., General Session Featuring Wave Review Awards
- 12:30–1:15 p.m., Featured Presentation: Operations In A COVID Environment - Learning From 2020 To Succeed In 2021
  - 1:30–2 p.m., Ask The Experts: Human Resources
  - 1:30–2 p.m., Ask The Experts: Operating During COVID-19
  - 1:30–2 p.m., Ask The Experts: Social Media & Advertising
- 2–2:45 p.m., Better Experiences Through Better Accessibility
- 2–2:45 p.m., Delegation For The Win!
- 2–2:45 p.m., Lifeguard Marketing & Recruiting Efforts
- 3–3:30 p.m., Connect & Chat: Smaller Park Forum
- 3–3:30 p.m., Connect & Chat: Lifeguard Training
- 3–3:30 p.m., Connect & Chat: Promotions & Events
- 3–3:30 p.m., Connect & Chat: Hiring & Onboarding Virtually
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., Step By Step To Waterpark Success
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., Bring Out Your Inner Customer Service Guru
- 3:30–4:15 p.m., Take Control Of Your Brand's Social Media Presence In 2020
- 4:15–5 p.m., Facilities Risk Assessments: Managing Safety & Maintenance In Waterparks
- 4:15–5 p.m., Managing Risk - Becoming A High Reliability Organization
- 4:15–5 p.m., When To Resurface Your Waterslides



WWA is planning to return to its normal symposium and trade show, featuring the active exhibit floor, in 2021.

AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

## ►WWA Continued from page 1

as well as the Board Awards honorees. These awards recognize excellence in leadership, safety, innovation and training and honor people working at various levels within the water leisure industry.

It has been quite a year for the entire industry. Ezra said that early on during the COVID-19 pandemic, the WWA staff put a focus on being the industry's go-to resource for finding vetted and trustworthy information about the pandemic, putting together resources and guidance on how the virus spreads, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization information and how water park operators could hope to safely reopen when they received approval from their local health officials.

"Our COVID-19 Resources page quickly became our most visited page on waterparks.org," Ezra said. "In addition to our continuous website updates, we stepped up our Webinar Wednesday programming, doing as many as two or three per week that covered meaningful topics on the pandemic and beyond, in a format that all could access from wherever they were working."

Ezra said they knew many people lost their jobs starting in March, some temporarily, but they still needed and wanted to stay connected to the latest information about the industry.

"So it was important to us that our webinars, the digital version of *World Waterpark Magazine* and other resources remained accessible to our members, friends and colleagues in the industry."

WWA worked closely with partners at the CDC throughout their drafting process for

the Considerations for Public Pools, Hot Tubs and Water Playgrounds. This information was put into a document that became a keystone piece for health officials in many local markets.

"After the release of this document, we hosted a webinar with the CDC that attracted more than 1,200 registrants," she said.

WWA officials hope that the WWA40 Virtual will be just as and more successful as professionals share their information about this year's past experiences and how the future may unfold.

"The events of this year highlighted something we've always known about our industry, when creative thinking or innovative problem-solving is needed, our members are more than up to the task to respond in ways that keep safety top of mind," Ezra said.

"Of course, pandemics are tricky things to navigate because there is no specific rule-book with one-size-fits-all solutions to all problems," she added.

For those who operated in areas where phased re-openings were moving at a quicker pace, they were able to get reopened earlier in the summer season. Some areas were not able to reopen at all.

For those that did reopen, Ezra said they heard from those operators that guests returned in smaller numbers. Those that visited parks were inclined to spend money on services that improved their visit, such as cabanas or preset food and beverage packages resulting in higher per-caps for the parks.

The WWA 41st Annual Symposium and Trade Show has been set for Oct. 19-22, 2021, in San Antonio, Texas.

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# PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Las Vegas attractions return, expand — page 12 / Wyoming State Fair enjoys five-day run — page 20

## New mountain coaster in Southern California a Golden State first

*Wiegand Sports ride offers needed family fun during shutdown*

AT: Dean Lamanna

dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

BIG BEAR LAKE, Calif. — While state authorities had still not greenlit the full operational return of theme and amusement parks in California, several smaller outdoor recreational facilities that fell just outside the shutdown's parameters endeavored to help fill the amusement void before summer ended.

One such location in the mountains about 95 miles east of Los Angeles, **Alpine Slide at Magic Mountain** (no relation to the **Six Flags** park), quietly introduced in July the first mountain coaster sited within the Golden State's borders. Called **Mineshaft Coaster**, the handbraked, mostly gravity-powered ride — utilizing a stainless-steel track that differentiates it from the bobsled-style alpine slide with which it shares the facility's grounds — provides physically distanced thrills for one or two passengers per single cart-like vehicle.

Featuring bird's-eye views of snowmelt-fed, nearly 3,000-acre Big Bear Lake and the surrounding peaks, the 4,595-foot-long course incorporates two cable-driven lifts and winds down a forested hillside. The approximately six-minute ride could be described as a scenic wild mouse: bridges, tunnels, zippy dips, helices and sudden, unbanked turns are among its surprises. A vertical descent of 140 feet is negotiated twice by way of the two lifts.

These elements have made **Mineshaft Coaster** a hit with riders of all ages, according to **Julie Eubanks**, the facility's assistant



**Mineshaft Coaster delivers 4,595 feet of fun at up to 25 mph. Carts are secured to the track with undercarriage wheels, and speed is controlled by the rider. Loading station release intervals and human monitors stationed atop the ride's two cable-driven lifts help ensure safe 80-foot spacing between vehicles.**

AT/DEAN LAMANNA; COURTESY ALPINE SLIDE AT MAGIC MOUNTAIN

general manager. "Families, couples — everyone's enjoying it," she said during a late-August visit by *Amusement Today*. "Some people want to go fast, and some want to take in the scenery and do it a little bit slower and have a longer ride. It caters to everyone, practically, as long as they meet the minimum requirements."

Passengers must be at least 38 inches tall and three years old in order to ride with an adult of at least 18 years of age. Solo riders must be at least 54 inches tall.

The attraction is the trademarked **Alpine Coaster** product of Stevensville, Montana-based **Wiegand Sports GmbH**, the North American arm of German ride manufacturer **Josef Wiegand Co. & Kg**. The company, which has done more than 250 mountain coaster installations worldwide since the ride was first introduced in 1997, signed the contract for the Southern California job last December.

Supervision for the Big Bear Lake installation was provided

onsite by Wiegand Sports, with additional work completed by locally based **Towsley Welding & Construction**. Pouring of foundations was started in January and ride installation began in early March. And then, the COVID-19 pandemic began emerging rapidly in the U.S.

**Jessica Wedel**, sales/project manager for Wiegand Sports, told AT that company concerns about the coronavirus "got pretty serious" by the third week of March. "We brought all of our supervisors back home to Montana and took a month off," she said, noting that the engineering team conducted Zoom meetings and never lost sight of **Mineshaft Coaster's** targeted July 15 public opening. "This allowed Towsley to get well ahead of us on their to-do list. But once we returned, we moved quickly."

Concrete work continued into June, when the last of more than 80 foundations was completed. And what was originally expected to be a four-month



track installation schedule was wrapped by Wiegand in just 92 days, even with the team donning personal protective equipment and scrupulously disinfecting tools and machinery. "I was very proud of our crew," Wedel said.

Following acceleration tests and inspections by the **California Division of Occupational Safety and Health**, staff training was conducted. **Mineshaft Coaster** had a soft opening July 17. With pandemic-weary urban dwellers swelling summer tourism in Big Bear Lake and surrounding mountain communities, the attraction, with a throughput of 350 people per hour, was expected to be well on its way to recouping its approximate \$2.5 million cost.

Wedel pointed out several characteristics that set Wiegand **Alpine Coaster** apart from similar ride products, such as a braking system that works in all weather conditions (including

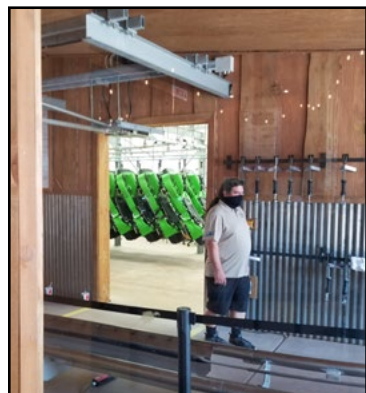
snow) and general operational efficiency. "Our queue and loading / unloading areas, for example, are designed to flow so that waiting for the patrons remains stress free," she said.

Wiegand's stateside customer service and spare parts departments, added Wedel, are always at the ready.

**Alpine Slide at Magic Mountain**, which has implemented coronavirus mitigation protocols ranging from hand-sanitizing stations and physical distancing markers to required off-ride mask wearing, is pleased with **Mineshaft Coaster** and the public response it has garnered. And it has become a personal favorite of staff.

"I love it," said the facility's **Julie Eubanks**. "I have two small kids and they love it, too. They just want to go as fast as you can go on it."

• [alpinebigbear.com](http://alpinebigbear.com)  
• [wiegandsportsusa.com](http://wiegandsportsusa.com)



Several **Mineshaft Coaster** features, such as midcourse tunnels and a pulley-based, loading station-adjacent storage system for the ride's 42 carts, enhance thrills and efficiency. The coaster winds around other attractions at **Alpine Slide at Magic Mountain**, including a **Soaring Eagle** zipline, go-karts, a double-flume waterslide, mini golf and the original bobsled-style ride of the facility's name. AT/DEAN LAMANNA





  
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# Beech Bend owners give a sigh of relief at season's end

**AT: Pam Sherborne**  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — The year 2020 is not one that **Charlotte Gonzalez**, whose family owns **Beech Bend Park**, would ever like to repeat. In fact, she is glad it is over as far as park operations go.

She is, of course, not alone. "We (amusement parks) are all pretty much in a big hole," Gonzalez said, just days before the last day of her park's 2020 season on Sept. 19.

And she fears that any industry business that might be carrying a lot of debt won't make it.

The COVID-19 global pandemic presented numerous challenges for amusement attractions worldwide.

Even though Gonzalez was able to open June 29, she said: "I am going to have to borrow money just to get through the winter with the small staff I need for the off-season."

Beech Bend lost 49% of the 2020 season right out of the chute for not being able to open. Then, once the park did open, attendance was down 40% to 45%.

"We blasted social media with our opening dates," Gonzalez said. "The governor's office didn't mandate a specific capacity for amusements. We were given a formula. We were to take the square-footage of our common area and divide that by 36. When I did that math, we could have had 20,000 people in here but we never got close to that."

Like many attractions, Gonzalez did set up a reservation system and also took walk-ins. When it was announced that amusement parks could open in Kentucky, she had two weeks to implement her safety plan that had

been approved by the governor's office.

"It was really a nightmare," she said.

Gonzalez's plan included painting six-foot social distancing markers everywhere in the park that a line might form, purchasing hand sanitizing stations and sanitation sprayers so staff could spray down rides and creating new signage. All employees had to wear face coverings all summer.

Temperature checks were required at the entry gate. A log of all guest names and contact information had to be kept. About 20% of Beech Bend's business comes from corporate parties of which there were none this year.

On top of all the logistical challenges of opening and the low attendance figures, annual operating costs still had to be paid. Those costs included the premium for general liability insurance, property insurance and taxes and licenses. Gonzalez said they were unable to get any prorated refunds.

"We had to pay them based on a normal operating season," she said.

And the 2020 season was far from that. Gonzalez expects to be hit in 2021 with lower income from season ticket sales due to honoring 2020 season tickets.

"I know that I am not alone when I say there is just no money," she said.

The Beech Bend Raceway was able to open for some regular local events in June, but ended up with only one larger special event. That was on Sept. 15. The Beech Bend Raceway was even more quiet this summer than the park. Where normally there would be a variety of drag racing events, Gonzalez said they had one.

• **beechbend.com**



Kentucky Rumbler is seen in the background of Beech Bend's water park attractions at the park's Splash Lagoon water park. COURTESY BEECH BEND PARK

## Park Post-its



**AT: Pam Sherborne**  
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A new boardwalk at the 131-year-old **Arnolds Park**, West Lake Okoboji, Iowa, is now complete.

The renovation of the boardwalk, also called the promenade, included extensive landscaping and planting, as well as programmable LED lighting on arches that run adjacent to Preservation Plaza in the park. Adjacent to the boardwalk is also the Berkley Bedell State Pier with a new fountain centered under three large scale sailboat sails, new concrete benches and plantings.

Restoration of the boardwalk was funded by **Imagine Iowa Great Lakes**. A total of 2,000 lineal feet of **Kebony** modified wood decking was used in the construction of the 11-foot-wide boardwalk. Kebony was also used for seating on precast concrete benches on the State Pier, which will create a connection between two phases of the boardwalk project and serve as a focal point for the Arnolds Park Promenade.

Brazil's southeast state of Sao Paulo, the epicenter of the country's novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, allowed amusement parks to reopen on Sept. 23 with social distancing measures in place.

Protocols issued by the state of Sao Paulo included: attendance limit of 40% of capacity, advance ticket sales online, temperature control at the entrance and mandatory use of masks.

Home to 46 million inhabitants, the most populous and industrialized state in Brazil has a high number of amusement parks, theme parks and water parks.

According to Brazil's **Ministry of Tourism**, four of the 10 most visited water parks in Latin America are in Sao Paulo, where the region's first confirmed case of COVID-19 was registered on Feb. 26.

Miami residents last month voted to approve a proposal by the owners of Miami's **Jungle Island** to build a 300-room hotel on city-owned Watson Island. With 100% of the vote counted, unofficial results released showed 59% of voters were in favor of the plan.

Jungle Island's owners have proposed building a 13-story hotel with eco-adventure themed attractions. To even pursue such a project, the owners needed voters to agree to waive competitive bidding in order to extend Jungle Island's lease to 2099 and allow for a hotel.

With voter approval, the proposed lease extension gives Jungle Island the right, but not the obligation, to build a privately financed hotel with a maximum height of 130 feet. If the hotel is built, owners will have to provide the city public benefits including \$750,000 to an affordable housing fund and \$700,000 for maintenance repairs at the adjacent park, **Ichimura Miami-Japan Garden**. The lease in-

cludes an option for a 15-year extension.

Under the measure endorsed by voters, Jungle Island will have four years to obtain a master building permit and six additional years to finalize construction of a hotel. The lease would be negated if owners miss either of the two deadlines.

**Knott's Berry Farm**, Buena Park, California, has added another twist to its run of food, beer and wine events with the new Taste of Fall-O-Ween, while the State of California keeps theme park rides and attractions closed due to the global pandemic.

The Taste of Fall-O-Ween craft beer and food event will run on 18 select dates. It began Sept. 25 and will run through Nov. 1 at the Buena Park theme park.

The Taste of Fall-O-Ween takes Knott's concept of the Taste of Knott's that ended Sept. 13 and the Taste of Calico before that and adds a Halloween twist to the event with a menu celebrating fall flavors.

The private ticketed event uses the food and beverage venues in the park while Knott's rides and attractions remain closed indefinitely.

The Taste of Fall-O-Ween menu will include a Beating Hearts Salad, Pumpkin Spice Churros and Graveyard Funnel Cake. Knott's will decorate the park in Halloween and harvest decor for the event. A trick-or-treating trail with candy stations will be set up in the fully-themed Camp Snoopy for kids as part of the Fall-O-Ween junior tasting card.

Visitors of all ages can wear costumes to the park, however, they also will be required to wear an approved Covid-19 face covering with the costume.

Park officials have said guests should expect a Taste of the Holidays event to follow if the Halloween food fest proves popular and California theme parks remain closed until the end of the year. Event admission will be limited to ensure reduced capacity, which could lead to sold out dates for the event.

Visitors must purchase a date-specific tasting card in advance on the Knott's website or app that will serve as a Taste of Fall-O-Ween admission ticket.

**Cory D. Karges**, a 2014 graduate of the **Pennsylvania College of Technology**, Williamsport, was featured recently on the college's web site to promote the college and demonstrate just one more field in which an industrial designer can call home.

Karges, who graduated with an industrial design major, is now the design manager for **Sign Producers Inc.**, Orlando, Florida, a custom designer, builder and installer of signs for **Universal**, **Disney** and other entertainment destinations throughout the world. Sign Producers is responsible for crafting signage that complements and enhances the inviting themes of rides, restaurants and resorts at renowned venues.

Karges' employs computer-aided design software to master his creations. Recent projects include signage for **Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge**, a 14-acre showcase at **Disney World** in Orlando and **Disneyland**, Anaheim, California, inspired by the **Star Wars** movies, and **Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure**, an immersive coaster experience added to **The Wizarding World of Harry Potter** at Universal, Orlando.

Pennsylvania College of Technology, an applied technology school, is affiliated with, but autonomous from, **Pennsylvania State University**, with campuses across the state.



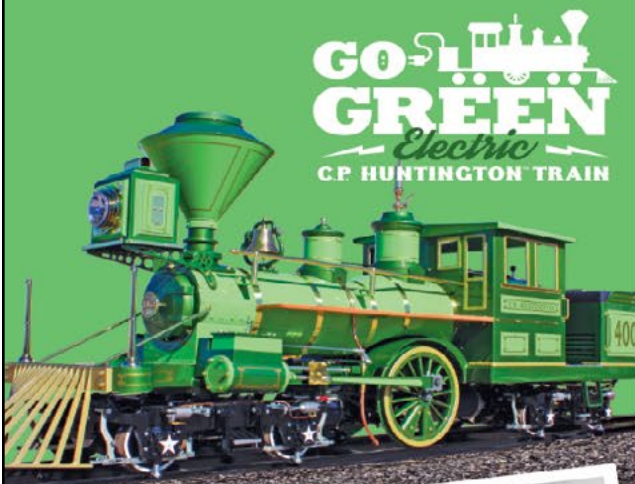
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# Las Vegas attractions return, expand — with safety top of mind

Experiential art venue Area15 among latest offerings around city

AT: Dean Lamanna  
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

LAS VEGAS — Sin City has survived recessions, tragedies and the ever-changing tastes of a public always hungry for entertainment. So perhaps it was no surprise that the world's mecca of gambling and divertimento was among the first major destinations in the U.S. to emerge from the shutdown wrought by the COVID-19 outbreak.

That several high-flying rides, topflight museums devoted to the city's history of neon and mobsters, and two major regional water parks — Cowabunga Bay Las Vegas and Wet'n'Wild Las Vegas — had resumed phased operation in time for summer was impressive. But the biggest amusement news arrived in the season's final days in the form of the much-anticipated Area15. The 200,000-square-foot entertainment center, located west of Interstate 15 and the Strip, is one of a kind — not just here but anywhere.

The venue's Sept. 17 grand opening delivered the requisite Vegas spectacle. With a parade of otherworldly vehicles, plumes



**Area15, a 200,000-square-foot experiential art-based entertainment center housing unique retail, restaurants and amusements, opened Sept. 17 west of the Strip. It is the brainchild of executives Michael Beneville and Winston Fisher.**  
COURTESY AREA15/LAURENT VELASQUEZ, PETER RUPRECHT

of colored smoke and eclectic performers, Area15 swung open its doors during a ceremony hosted by CEO **Winston Fisher** and Chief Creative Officer **Michael Beneville**, whose shared vision and passion for the endeavor surmounted the pandemic's challenges.

"We set out to design something that has never been built before — a vast bunker to house the burgeoning experience economy," said Beneville, having spent several years forging partnerships with immersive artists and high-profile brands for the project. "Area15 embod-



ies unbound innovation and creativity, and this opening will be the first step towards something truly magical."

Along with 40,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space, Area15 features immersive activities, massive art installations, wild design elements, groundbreaking technology, bars, eateries and unique retail. Current highlights:

- **Birdly Virtual Reality Experience** — Guests sail through the skies of New York or Singapore, explore prehistoric worlds or test their flying skills in a futuristic racing game.

- **Gallerie 360** inside The Portal — A fully immersive audiovisual experience featuring world-renowned digital artists inside a 360-degree projection-mapped room.

- **The Spine** — Running through the interior of Area15, this is a constantly evolving corridor filled with art installations, brand engagements, and unusual food and beverage offerings.

- **Haley's Comet** — Created by **Walltopia**, this is the first indoor dual-track, glider-like suspension ride in the U.S. It provides an exhilarating, bird's-eye view of The Spine and the vast interior of Area15 as it positions two riders for a race to the finish.

The coming weeks and months will bring a slew of additions to the venue, including **Meow Wolf's** interactive art installation **Omega Mart** (*Amusement Today*, September 2020), **Emporium** arcade, **Intel Innovation Hub** and **Five Iron**

**Golf**, an urban golfing simulation experience.

Area15 was initially operating on a preregistration basis in order to manage capacity (presently capped at 750 visitors daily, about 10% of actual capacity). The facility has implemented a scanning platform that screens visitors' temperatures accurately and noninvasively, detects the absence of a mask and alerts staff when physical distancing thresholds are not being met.

At the south end of Las Vegas Boulevard, **MGM Resorts Intl.'s Mandalay Bay** has expanded the offerings at its **Shark Reef Aquarium** — unveiling **Undersea Explorer Virtual Reality Theater**, an all-new family attraction from **Immotion**. The immersive experience center features state-of-the-art, motion platform-based VR technology and two short films, *Shark Dive* and *Swimming with Humpbacks*, that transport guests to the ocean's depths.

"At a time when getting out of the house feels like a luxury, it's a thrill to open our doors and let the public experience *Undersea Explorer*," said **Rod Findley**, group commercial director at Immotion. "We've created a safe, educational and adventurous way to explore underwater wildlife and hope that guests become passionate about oceanic conservation through this

► See VEGAS, page 14

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## ►VEGAS

Continued from page 12

unique VR experience.”

Theater seats are cleaned and the VR goggles are sanitized with ultraviolet light after each viewing. In addition, hand-sanitizing stations are available throughout the attraction.

Within walking distance of Mandalay Bay and other major south-end resorts, the new \$10 million home of the nonprofit **Pinball Hall of Fame** is rapidly taking shape. When it opens in December or January, the 28,000-square-foot space will house more than 700 vintage and rare pinball machines and videogames — three times as many as its current Tropicana Avenue location.

Elsewhere in town, existing attractions are soaring confidently in the new normal.

Mid-Strip, **Caesars Entertainment's The Linq Promenade** resumed operation of its two big-ticket rides: FlyLinq and High Roller observation wheel. The 10-course, 1,121-foot-long FlyLinq zipline now offers both forward and backward experiences as well as flight hours extended until midnight Thursday through Monday. The attractions have implemented stringent health and safety protocols for team members and guests, includ-



New and returning Vegas attractions include Undersea Explorer Virtual Reality Theater at Mandalay Bay, FlyLinq and High Roller at The Linq Promenade, the Downtown Las Vegas Archway (rendering shown) and the original sign from the 1955-built Moulin Rouge Hotel, now re-illuminated at The Neon Museum. COURTESY MGM RESORTS INTL., CAESARS ENTERTAINMENT, YESCO, THE NEON MUSEUM

ing sanitization of equipment between rides and mandatory protective face coverings.

Farther north along Las Vegas Boulevard, the domed and tower-top ride collections of **The Adventuredome** at **Circus Circus Las Vegas** and **The Strat Hotel, Casino & SkyPod** (formerly **The Stratosphere**), respectively, are back in action with a full range of safety protocols in place.

Two new projects adjacent to these properties signal that Sin City's future is even brighter. At the foot of The Strat, work was being

completed in late summer on the **Downtown Las Vegas Archway** — a \$6.5 million, boulevard-spanning gateway created by the fabled local neon sign manufacturer **YESCO**. Just south of Circus Circus, the 700-foot-plus hotel tower of the years-in-development, \$4.3 billion **Resorts World** has been finished. The huge Strip addition is expected to open next summer.

In Downtown Las Vegas, two award-winning attractions — **The Mob Museum** and **The Neon Museum** — have not only reopened but added new exhibits.



Putting a pop culture spin on its subheading as the “National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement,” the The Mob Museum has introduced “The Mob on TV,” comprising costumes and props seen onscreen in three classic television series: *The Sopranos*, *Boardwalk Empire* and *Breaking Bad*. Meanwhile,

The Neon Museum is celebrating the recent re-illumination of the sign from the long-gone, 1955-built **Moulin Rouge Hotel**, the city's first major racially integrated casino. It is one of many historic resort and business signs in the museum's nostalgia-stirring Neon Boneyard outdoor exhibit.

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## New station for Knoebels' Phoenix



ELYSBURG, Pa. — Recently, Knoebels Amusement Resort completed finishing touches on the front of the Phoenix roller coaster station. The exit ramp was extended in length and made wider. The exit also serves as the handicap entrance/exit. Now, two wheelchairs can pass each other. In addition, a 70-foot long, 140-person capacity queue (in non-COVID-19 times) was constructed after the line goes under the station and before it heads up the entrance ramp. This was done to help reroute some of the line that has been known to extend out into the midway.

COURTESY KNOEBELS AMUSEMENT RESORT; AT/B. DEREK SHAW



## Rides 4 U and US Thrill Rides combine efforts to offer new style of Unicoaster

SOMERVILLE, N.J. — US Thrill Rides has created a new model of its tried-and-true Unicoaster. Called the Unicoaster Roulette, the new version is designed to look like a giant roulette wheel. Fittingly, it has the tag line of "The Game You Can Ride," since a lucky rider can hit a winning number. A rider can be thrilled and win a prize all at the same time.

Rides 4 U, of Somerville, N.J., announced that the company is teaming up with US Thrill Rides to market and sell the new Unicoaster ride to the amusement industry. These two industry leaders have now joined forces to introduce one of the most exciting and innovative new ride concepts to our industry. Touting the Unicoaster as the next step in the evolution of amusement rides, the companies are excited for the industry to consider this new and unique feature ride attraction for its future attraction plans.

The ride has all the design and technology as the existing US Thrill Rides Unicoaster in that the rider has control of their experience. They can rock their vehicles forward and backward and even flip them, or choose to not rock at all.

In this new concept, riders can win a prize or prizes depending on where the ride stops. There are two variables that can determine a winner. One is that the giant rolling wheel stops on the track on a certain number, like Red 24. The other is where the top of wheel, that also is shaped as a roulette wheel, hits a number.

"We're excited to add the Unicoaster, manufactured by Visa, to our lineup of ride offerings," stated Len Soled of Rides 4 U. "The thrill factor and unique added game aspect make this ride a sure bet for fun!"

Repeat riders are anticipated with the



Rides 4 U has partnered with US Thrill Rides to sell and distribute the unique Unicoaster ride. Specifically, the two companies will be promoting the new Unicoaster Roulette version of the attraction which offers a chance for riders to win prizes. COURTESY RIDES 4 U

added appeal of winning prizes. Venues can tailor the prize to fit their needs. Casinos can even offer cash jackpots, making Unicoaster Roulette a centerpiece ride.

The Unicoaster is 60 feet in diameter with eight arms and 16 seats. The cars are spaced 12 feet apart. It measures 18 feet tall. The ride capacity is 196 people per hour, which generates a two-minute ride cycle.

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## Disney announces makeover for popular Splash Mountain attractions



ORLANDO — In late-June, Disney offered a first glimpse of a redesign and retheming of the popular Splash Mountain attractions, currently at Disney's Magic Kingdom and Disneyland. Disney stated that its Imagineers have been working on the new look since 2019, with a theme that is inspired by the animated Disney film *The Princess and the Frog*. The ride's storyline picks up after the final kiss in the movie, having riders join Princess Tiana and Louis on a musical adventure — featuring some of the powerful music from the film — as they prepare for their first-ever Mardi Gras performance. The announcement came as a change.org petition had been circulating calling for a retheme to the ride, steering it away from the elements and characters of the controversial Disney film *Song of the South*, which the attraction was originally based on. No timeline has been released for the forthcoming retheming. COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD



# Anakeesta adds multiple attractions; tower goes to new heights

**AT:** Tim Baldwin

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GATLINBURG, Tenn. — Opened in 2017, **Anakeesta** has garnered an array of awards and shows no signs of stopping. For its 2020 season, the Smoky Mountain attraction continues to offer something for everyone. While there are ziplines and an alpine coaster for the more adventurous, the one-of-kind “theme park” focuses on maintaining and experiencing the beauty of the region while offering a wide array of activities.

Literally topping the list of new attractions is the AnaVista Tower. Standing 60 feet tall atop the mountains, the tower takes claim of being the highest point in downtown Gatlinburg and offers 360-degree spectacular views. What strikes many people is the pleasingly aesthetic appearance of the tower, which was designed by Co-owner and Managing Partner **Bob Bentz**. He said the inspiration came from the garden.

“At first we went through the process of designing what you would call a typical observation tower,” said Bentz. “I looked at it and said, ‘That doesn’t fit Anakeesta.’ It overlooks the garden area. Every year we plant about 5,000 flowers there. The tower is the tallest point at Anakeesta and it’s a crowning element. We wanted it to be a sculptural, artistic element to the garden. It’s iconic and we wanted to be able to light it up at night.”

From the upper deck, the supports to the tower blossom



Three treehouses in the sky (above left) are connected via nets and activities. A small, aesthetic splash pad (above right) gives youngsters a way to cool off in the hotter months while creating a beautiful setting for everyone. COURTESY ANAKEESTA



outward with four of the supports serving as a compass rose to inform visitors of the directions they are looking. Bentz says the top symbolizes flower petals opening up to the sky.

Like most things at Anakeesta, the owners wanted it to be made of wood, which accentuates the natural setting of the park. As stewards of the 70 acres of land, the owners want to embrace the ambience of the National Park surroundings. The flared supports at the bottom symbolize the roots of the tree.

The facility is in the process of completing an accessibility route for people to enjoy all displays in the garden. A series of walkways and wooden decks make the garden ADA accessible.

A new Black Bear Village expansion clusters 2020 additions that include a children’s waterplay area with a water-

fall, new bathroom facilities and a stunning new Cliff Top restaurant. Ironically, the park is playing with names. The previous restaurant was called Cliff Top, but it is being renamed Smokehouse Barbeque & Brewery. The new Cliff Top features more upscale dining. The indoor portion seats 170 people, and the outside deck can accommodate another 70 guests.

“The new Cliff Top serves multiple purposes,” Bentz told *Amusement Today*. “It has the restaurant dining which includes the bar, but it also includes a new retail store called Mercantile and a walk-up Kephart Café on the outside, named after a famous figure here in the Smoky Mountains that worked to save the [Great Smoky Mountains] National Park. We also have the Ridge Ramblers — the large trucks we added last year for people who don’t wish to ride the chairlift — and this has a new loading/unloading area for those.”

Queuing areas help expedite the boarding procedures, making it more efficient.

Part of that complex features a waterplay and splash

**The new AnaVista Tower is the tallest point in downtown Gatlinburg. The supports from the observation deck serve as a compass (inset). COURTESY ANAKEESTA**



The new upscale Cliff Top restaurant offers both indoor and outdoor dining. It is part of a complex that encompasses multiple additions. COURTESY ANAKEESTA

pad area, which was designed to resemble a Tennessee mountain stream. It includes a waterfall, spray jets and figures of woodland creatures. Part of the Black Bear Village expansion is new restrooms where small ones can change if they like.

“We do sell changes of clothes for kids if they choose to get wet,” said Bentz. “We will probably start selling swimsuits in our shops. We found after a few weeks that parents are very resourceful. They know what to expect when they go somewhere. These kids show up in their bathing suits and they are ready to go.”

The design was done in-house and Anakeesta worked with a local pool contractor to install what the park envisioned. A fire pit and outdoor seating area is positioned within that expansion, as well as an enlarged bandstand area to the overlook area, which seats about 140 people.

Also new is TreeVenture, a kids’ dream come true with treehouses in the sky. The attraction offers an assortment of activities from swings, climbing courses,

nets and a slide. It opened in June, a few weeks before the tower was completed.

“It’s a non-belay adventure element,” said Bentz. “The centerpiece [are] these three treehouses. Between the treehouses, both above and below them, as well as side to side, are netted challenge elements that take you from one to the other. There is a vertical challenge too — as high as four stories. There’s four different levels. There are observations decks, a slide and all sorts of elements.”

For those less adventurous, Anakeesta has boasted its 800-foot-long Treetop Skywalk since opening. It features skybridges suspended 50 to 60 feet in the air and places guests below a canopy of trees. All activities at Anakeesta are included in the general admission beginning with the chairlift or Ridge Ramblers that transport visitors 600 feet up into the mountains, with the exceptions of the dueling ziplines, mountain coaster and gem mining.

The investments in the new additions are reported to total \$6.5 million.

•anakeesta.com



## Lembang Park & Zoo, Osool Entertainment add Semnox

MANGALORE, India. — **Lembang Park and Zoo**, one of the largest zoos in Bandung city, Indonesia, has reopened post-lockdown with the help of **Semnox Ticketing** and cashless technologies. Catering to both animal and amusement enthusiasts, the venue has a capacity to accommodate 10,000 customers at any given time.

"[Semnox's] Parafait System has been reliable in allowing us to manage all transactions and in generating reports for our tenants inside the premises, as well as our accounting team," said **Erwin Wijaya**, partner at Lembang Park and Zoo.

The operations at Lembang Park and Zoo have been completely powered by the Parafait Amusement Park Management System since December 2019. The park uses the Ticketing and Access control solution via the barcoded wristbands and Semnox Readers and turnstiles. Single bands can be used by guests to enjoy a whole range of activities inside the park including paying for food and other facilities. The park is able to continuously expand its offerings with new attractions, arcade games and mem-

bership cards supported by the integrated solution from Semnox.

"For us [Lembang Park] offers a perfect opportunity to showcase how our single solution can support all functions from ticketing solutions, integrated access control, arcades and cashless operations across the park," said **Ashish KS**, head of Far East Parks for Semnox.

**Osool Entertainment** of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, also added Semnox's arcade cashless system.

Osool Entertainment's offer focuses on various indoor entertainment activities including go-karting, soft-play for kids and an arcade.

"We were looking for a card system that could handle our multiple entertainment activities and that would allow our customers to move seamlessly from one activity to another," said **Adbullah Noman**, technical lead at Osool Entertainment. "Semnox has delivered as per their commitments and we are proud to launch their cashless system in our first store."

Osool plans to update its other locations to Semnox's system in the coming weeks.

• [semnox.com](http://semnox.com)

## Historic carnival dark ride haunts at Land of Illusion



MIDDLETOWN, Ohio — The Land of Illusion started with a small haunted trail in the backyard of a wooded property in Southwestern Ohio. What started out as a small, scary trail run via extension cords has evolved into a 140-acre haunted scream park. It is now the largest haunted theme park of its kind in the area with multiple individually themed haunted attractions. With the uncertainty of the 2020 season for many attractions, Land of Illusion got creative and reached into history in order to add an attraction for visiting guests. The park has added an authentic 1960s carnival dark ride, **Mystery Mansion**. The unique ride boasts decades of history and provides a bright spot along the park's eerie midways. Inside, the dark ride provides multiple classic blacklight effects as well as a few pneumatic jump-scares along a looping track. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



## FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson

[jrobinson@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jrobinson@amusementtoday.com)

Dedicated to the \$20 billion family entertainment center market, the ShowUp trade show has been announced for October 27-29 by location-based virtual reality expert **Bob Cooney**.

At ShowUp, industry operators will join with manufacturers and developers of cutting-edge technology solutions like 5G, AI, VR, AR, and Photogrammetry, to cross-pollinate ideas and drive innovation.

"Operators think COVID-19 is an existential threat," Cooney said, "but it's just the tip of the iceberg. The real danger is the acceleration of in-home entertainment technologies spurred on by the pandemic."

"The shutdown challenges the industry, but it will come back. Countries like New Zealand, Australia, and Singapore got control of the virus early, and operators have returned to near or above pre-COVID levels. There's a massive pent-up demand for location-based entertainment among families."

ShowUp will be online and will feature keynotes, roundtables, case studies, workshops, interactive live games and multiple networking sessions. Most sessions will be participatory.

**Laserforce International**, a laser tag equipment manufacturer for more than 30 years, announced its relationship with **The Bowling Proprietors' of America** (BPAA) and its Smart Buy program. Laserforce is the only laser tag equipment to be coveted within the BPAA Smart Buy program.

"This speaks to the reputation, robustness and reliability of our Laserforce equipment," explained **Jason Wallace** of Laserforce. "Over 360 operating locations around the world enjoy the many benefits of the power of Laserforce. BPAA members will be able to unlock new revenue streams in their centers."

The Smart Buy program combines the power of all its BPAA members centers to work with vendors and suppliers to obtain discounts and rates that are normally only made available to large chains.

Laserforce already supplies its equipment to many BPAA member centers.

**Lex Live**, a new entertainment center in downtown Lexington, hoped to open its doors to the public within the by early October.

The nearly 90,000-square-foot complex — located across from Rupp Arena — features a virtual reality arcade that can host Esports tournaments, a bowling alley, a corner bar with a stage for live entertainment, a sports bar and 10 movie theaters.

The facility also serves food which is all made from scratch, and both private events and showings can be hosted at Lex Live.

"Nobody expected what we are going through now was going to happen for sure," owner and CEO **George Krikorian** said. "What I do know is that at this point we're able to operate when we open shortly. We'll be able to operate it at 50% capacity, and

if we're able to do that, we'll be successful and stay above water."

**Wilderness Resort** officials announced that the new Take Flight Aerial Adventure Ride opened on September 2.

The new ride is a FlyRide from **SimEx Iwerks** which can take up to 60 participants on a simulated aerial adventure. The movie, *Flying Wild*, takes participants soaring over famous national landmarks, national parks and features aerial footage ever shot of Wisconsin Dells.

The FlyRide has 12 different ride vehicles, which each seat five guests, located on three different stories. The new attraction is located off of the completely redone New Frontier lobby.

This summer, Wilderness Resort also unveiled a new 3,000-square-foot Lost Cabin laser tag attraction and a new Twister escape by **DOA** based on the 1974 Super Outbreak.

After 27 years in business, **Laser Quest** is permanently closing all of its 36 laser tag arena locations in North America.

The parent company, Canadian-based **Versent Corporation**, has taken the action because of the COVID-19 pandemic and an increasingly uncertain economic climate. These factors had made the continued operation of many locations next to impossible.

According to the Laser Quest website, some of its locations may reopen under new ownership.

**Urban Air Adventure Park** in Plymouth, Minnesota, started the "Learn & Fly" program, which combines study time with activities for students in kindergarten through 5th grade. The new program is designed to help families of students in hybrid or distance learning.

"Our teachers are certified. The teacher aides have various backgrounds but the aides are usually going to school for teaching," explained **Paul Krause**, general manager of the Urban Air Adventure Park.

Classrooms are held in Urban Air party rooms. They can accommodate up to 130 kids a day with a maximum of 10 kids per classroom. The students are required to have a mask on during class time while social distancing.

The program takes kids either two to three days a week or an entire week. The distance learning program was designed to give structure and routine for families.

The U.K. has introduced more COVID-19 rules that affect arcades.

In England, Scotland and Wales, arcades must close from 10pm to 5am, all staff and customers must wear face coverings unless eating and drinking and customers must be seated.

Additionally, venues have to collect contact details of customers so that the "track and trace" system can work if someone visiting is subsequently found to be infected.



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# 108th Wyoming State Fair has a successful five-day run in August

AT: B. Derek Shaw  
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DOUGLAS, Wyo. — While many state and county fairs across the country have been shuttered or extremely modified, organizers of the **Wyoming State Fair (WSF)** were able to offer an experience close to what has taken place in previous years.

"Navigating the production of a state fair during COVID-19 is like building a brand new fair, luckily with the nature of Wyoming geographically, the population of the state that we serve, and the layout of the **Wyoming State Fairgrounds** we were able to execute a State Fair with all of the traditional components," said **Courtney Conkle**, general manager. The fair is billed as Wyoming's premiere summer event.

Conkle, whose family has a long history in the concessionaire side of the industry, became the general manager last September. She had previously served as interim CEO of the **Lake County Fair**, Lakeport, California. Her baptism by fire came during her inaugural year in Wyoming. During the five-day operation, August 11-15, attendance revenue increased by 129.3% from 2019. This was the result of both increased attendance and the fair raising the adult admission rate to \$5.00. Near perfect weather certainly did not hurt, either.

**Carnival Midway Attractions**, Orange, California, was the ride provider bringing in 12 major and six kiddie rides along with eight games and two food wagons.

"Our previous contractor was unable to route to



The five-day fair saw a 129% revenue increase over 2019. This was attributed to increased attendance at the fair, raising the adult admission and excellent weather.

COURTESY PICKREL PHOTOGRAPHY

Wyoming due to COVID-19 and Carnival Midway Attractions joined the WSF team less than a month from opening day of the fair. They brought in great equipment and were very good to work with," said Conkle.

**Tony Guadagno**, Owner of Carnival Midway Attractions had a positive experience with the fair as well. "The fair staff was great and professional to work with, which made a great experience and an awesome fair."

"Our jump from **Lincoln County Fair**, Afton, Wyoming, to the state fair in Douglas was tight, but that's how it goes up there, said Guadagno. "We closed Saturday night, tore down and traveled Sunday, set up Monday and opened Tuesday. That's what we do!" He was thankful to have 75% of his American crew on

hand this year coupled with help and support from his family's operation, **G and S Shows** (Guadagno and Sons Amusements,) Garden Grove, California. "It was huge for the Wyoming run and operation this year. [It] just felt good to be out and around family. The weather cooperated with minimal problems. Everything just clicked."

The strongest rides included **Typhoon (ARM)**, **Himalaya (Wisdom)**, **Vertigo (ARM)** and **Pharaoh's Fury (Chance Rides)**. A Century Wheel (Chance Rides) helped top off the midway. Some of the rides brought in had never been seen at the Wyoming State Fair. The ride midway generated around \$140,000, up 40%.

**Big T Concessions**, owned by **John Taggart** was the game operator and **Blake Bishop**, **Bishop Amusement**

**Rides** brought in a food stand to join the carnival's route this year.

"Our Covid practices consisted of sanitizing fog machines, hand sanitizers on ride fence entrances along with employees wearing face masks," Guadagno said. "Overall, it was a challenge but met with an eager crew to just get out and work."

Earlier this year the Wyoming State Fair did a complete brand refurbishment — the first in its history. Conkle went on to explain.

"Our marketing plan was given a full overhaul, a new look, and a redefined vision. The marketing and advertising budget is just over 100k annually with the support of the **Converse County Tourism Board**. We do our very best to have a robust and differentiated marketing strategy that targets a wide range of potential markets."

This year the fair had a new cookie vendor that made homemade cookie buckets. Also popular were **Nutella** funnel cakes and homemade ice cream. Entertainment highlights included two **PRCA** rodeo nights, demolition derby (with a junior version as well) and a motor-sports night.

Conkle talked about how the fair met the additional challenges brought on by the pandemic. "The health and safety plan that was put into place for us to gain our exception approval to have the 2020 fair was incredibly intensive. One of the highlights of the program that I would highly recommend to any event managers attempting to produce in this current environment would be the addition of health and safety plan implementation consultants. These individuals essentially served in a compliance officer role to ensure that the protocols outlined in the health and safety plan were being executed as promised." A crew of "Safe Distancing Ambassadors," whose job it was to tour the grounds and entrance area, was utilized. They gently reminded attendees to follow safety protocols currently in place.

"Our team at the Wyoming State Fair is very hopeful that the production of the 2020 WSF in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic can serve as an inspiration to our entire industry and a case study in terms of how large scale events can still transpire in a post-Covid world," said Conkle.

The 2021 edition is scheduled to take place August 17-21.

•wystatefair.com



The ride midway was set up in a grassy area of the 118-acre Wyoming State Fairgrounds. A total of 18 rides were brought in, six of which were kiddie ones. A portion of the ride midway that was run by Carnival Midway Attractions, with additional help by G and S Shows. The Wyoming State Fair had its own unique way of asking people to social distance: stay one cow length apart (above middle). COURTESY WYOMING STATE FAIR



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## MIDWAYSCENE

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The 10-acre Pirates of Emmerson haunted theme park that takes place annually at the **Alameda County Fairgrounds**, Pleasanton, California, comes with a twist this year. Due to the pandemic it is an automobile-only drive-through event. Attendees stay in their cars, while tuned into a soundtrack on the radio. There are still live actors, large-scale sets and plenty of scares. Pedestrians, motorcycles, bicycles, RVs, motor homes, trailers, golf carts, top down convertibles or passengers in pickup beds are not allowed. The maximum amount of passengers is limited to the legal limits of the vehicle.

Tickets are \$94.99 per automobile. The haunt, now in its 29th year, runs through November 1.

**Ray Cammack Shows (RCS)** got creative and provided three rides to the 2020 **Sturgis Motorcycle Rally**, Sturgis, South Dakota, August 7-16. They included a **KMG Mach1** (Speed), a **KMG G Force** (Fire Ball) and a **Lamberink Wheel**. This was the 80th rally and the first time carnival rides were part of the mix. There were also carnival food and games available during the 2 p.m. to midnight operational hours.

On the event website, the vice president of RCS said, "Come and be the first one to ride the RCS observation wheel, [and] get a good look of the Black Hills and the surrounding areas from about 110 feet in the air."

The 146th annual **Centre County Grange and Encampment Fair**, Centre Hall, Pennsylvania, was cancelled this year. As one of the last remaining fairs of its type, the organization retooled its thinking, creating "Getaway at Grange Park." Expanding on the encampment already in place, the fair transformed Grange Park into a campground.

In a typical year a thousand families rent a 14 x 14 foot Army regulation wall tent, for two weeks, immediately before and after the nine-day August fair. This "home away from home" has campers bringing gaming systems, kitchen sinks, furniture, and beds of all types.

Now through October 17, people can bring their RV or tent to Grange Park to camp for one or more nights. The sites have electric and water hook-ups. Friends and family can camp in adjacent sites (pending availability). Rental RVs are available on-site. Each site accommodates an RV plus a tent or up to two tents. The maximum amount of people permitted to stay overnight per campsite is 10. The maximum amount of people permitted to gather at each campsite is 25. Social distancing of RVs per state government regulations is 40 feet apart.

"We had a good response. The word is just getting out," said **Darlene Confir**, general manager.

The event returns again mid-April of 2021.

Canadian Courts have been working to figure out how — and where — to resume jury trials after months of delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The **Calgary Stampede**, Calgary, Alberta, usually home to cowboys, livestock and fairgoers is now a temporary home for lawyers, jurors and those on trial. The Big Four events building and rodeo grandstand are the facilities

that are being used as the Alberta court system does not have adequate facilities for proper social distancing.

**Balfour Der**, a veteran Calgary defense lawyer told **The Canadian Press**, while it may be unusual and inconvenient, it's not unheard of. "I've done trials in the **Elks Lodge** in a small town in northern Saskatchewan. I've done a jury selection for a very notorious murder case in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, in the civic centre, because it was the only building that could house the 500 potential jurors," said Der.

The largest agricultural event in Pennsylvania, the **Pennsylvania Farm Show**, held for eight days in early January, is going virtual in 2021, due to the pandemic.

"There are times in the life of a farmer when the risks are too great or uncertain, requiring farmers to make the tough decision to leave a field fallow," said **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture** Secretary **Russell Redding**. "To protect our assets — both our people and our resources — from incalculable losses, we have made the tough decision to take a year to lie in fallow. Rather than an in-person Farm Show, we will celebrate Pennsylvania agriculture virtually for 2021 as we prepare for a productive future," he said in a release.

With a theme of "Cultivating Tomorrow," the details of the 105th farm show — the first held virtually — will be announced as they unfold. Virtual events will focus on education and awareness for both the general public and the agriculture industry. The show is billed as the nation's largest indoor agricultural event, typically featuring 6,000 animals, 12,000 competitive exhibits, and 300 commercial exhibitors within one million square feet of space on 23 acres with 11 halls and three arenas. There are no rides except two that have been brought in by the **Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association** as fundraising opportunities for the showmen and Farm Show Foundation scholarship funds.

For the first time in 70 years, **Frances Nell Blanc** didn't compete in a county or state fair culinary competition. The culprit? COVID-19.

Blanc, an 89-year-old from Bradenburg, Kentucky, has baked cinnamon rolls, dinner rolls, brownies, yeast bread and other tasty treats for the competitions she enters. Three hundred and eighty-five culinary prize ribbons are the result of her work since 1950, entering state and county fair contests with family recipes from her grandmother and aunt.

Normally each mid-August, Blanc embarks on an all-day baking marathon. Like clockwork, on the day **Kentucky State Fair** entries are due, she gets up at about 6 a.m. and works into the afternoon, baking anywhere from five to seven submissions, then driving nearly one hour to deliver her entries. While Blanc could prepare the food the previous evening, she wants everything as fresh as possible.

Throughout the years she's won four Grand Champion ribbons, two Sweepstakes and a few silver trays from the Kentucky State Fair for her culinary endeavors. Typically Blanc wins several ribbons between the state and county fairs each year. Her first baking competition took place in Knoxville when she was 19 years old.

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# Miller's Spectacular Shows winning bidder for Illinois State Fair

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SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — The new midway provider for the 2021 Illinois State Fair is **Miller's Spectacular Shows, LLC**, Greenbriar, Arkansas, a 5th generation family-owned operation. The announcement was made in September. Six carnival vendors are registered in Illinois under NIGP (National Institute of Governmental Purchasing's) code in BidBuy, with two that bid, including the current operator, **North American Midway Entertainment (NAME)**. The company has held the contract since the mid-1990s (originally under the **Blomsness-Thebault** moniker).

**Freddy Miller**, president of the show was happy with winning the contract. "To receive the contract for a fair of this magnitude is a tremendous honor. With how disastrous the season has

been for the amusement industry as a whole — with daily announcements of cancellations and rescheduling — this news gave us a much needed morale boost looking forward into the 2021 season."

**Krista Lister**, public information officer, **Illinois Department of Agriculture**, explained how the selection process works: "State agencies and the Chief Procurement Office for General Services use BidBuy to advertise solicitation opportunities, evaluate bids and publish contract awards."

The contract calls for a minimum of 40 rides, of which eight are to be spectaculars. In addition, at least seven of the smaller ones will be located in Adventure Village (former site of **State Fair Amusement Park**, 1940-1992), a special second midway for kiddie rides and attractions. Skill games and food concessions are

not to exceed a total of 1,100 feet. Additional support equipment is included in the contract (benches, signs, ticket boxes, light tower and numerous generators of varying kilowatts.) Temporary improvements for Adventure Village call for landscaping, picnic tables and benches.

Miller talked about what he plans to bring. "We will be bringing in quite a different spread of equipment compared to previous years. Our operation carries a handful of unique rides, unseen at this fair. Such rides include the **X-Scream (Majestic Mfg.)**, **Eclipse (Fabbri Group)**, **Mega Bounce (Larson Intl./A.R.M.)**, and the much-anticipated return of the **Skywheel (Allan Herschell Company)**. The Skywheel was once a staple of the Illinois State Fair midway. We are currently drafting multiple layouts in order to provide a fresh feeling and look for the carnival midways."

The initial contract runs through 2024, with the state reserving the right to renew for up to six additional years.

The operation is not new to Illinois, having provided rides for the **DuQuoin State Fair**, DuQuoin, the past 19 years. "We are incredibly excited to have both contracts. We feel that the transition will be smooth, as we have experience working with the **State of Illinois** and understand the requirements and effort of being the contractor for their fairs," said Miller. "Although both fairs are incredibly similar in their provided attraction, they are different in backdrop and atmosphere."

The addition of the Illinois State Fair has improved their routing. "Normally, our operation has a five-week route in Illinois that covers four fairs, following two months in Kentucky. For 2021, the two state fairs of Illinois will be our only engagements in the state. We will be sadly moving on from fairs we have highly enjoyed in the past, but must adjust our schedule in this

manner in order to be at our best for both state fairs. This will also lower our mileage and fuel costs, as we eliminate some bouncing back and forth across large areas."

Miller's Spectacular Shows used to operate with split routing. "Now the show stays in one unit the entire season in order to keep both of my sons and their wives, **Trey and Katie Miller**, **Drew and Holly Miller**, all together in order to train them for the future of our show," said Miller. "My two sons are trained and geared towards different aspects of the industry, with overlapping responsibilities in the middle. Trey handles the bulk of the up/down of the equipment and maintenance. Drew oversees concessions and public engagement/social media, as well as working with fair boards. My wife **Patsy** has worked to train both daughter-in-law, to run our show office as well as finances and accounting year-round."

The 2021 Illinois State Fair is scheduled for August 12-22.

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# WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► News Splash — page 28 / Zebec Water Sport's success is a family business — Business page 32

## Playa Maya Water Park takes center stage in Jiangxi, China

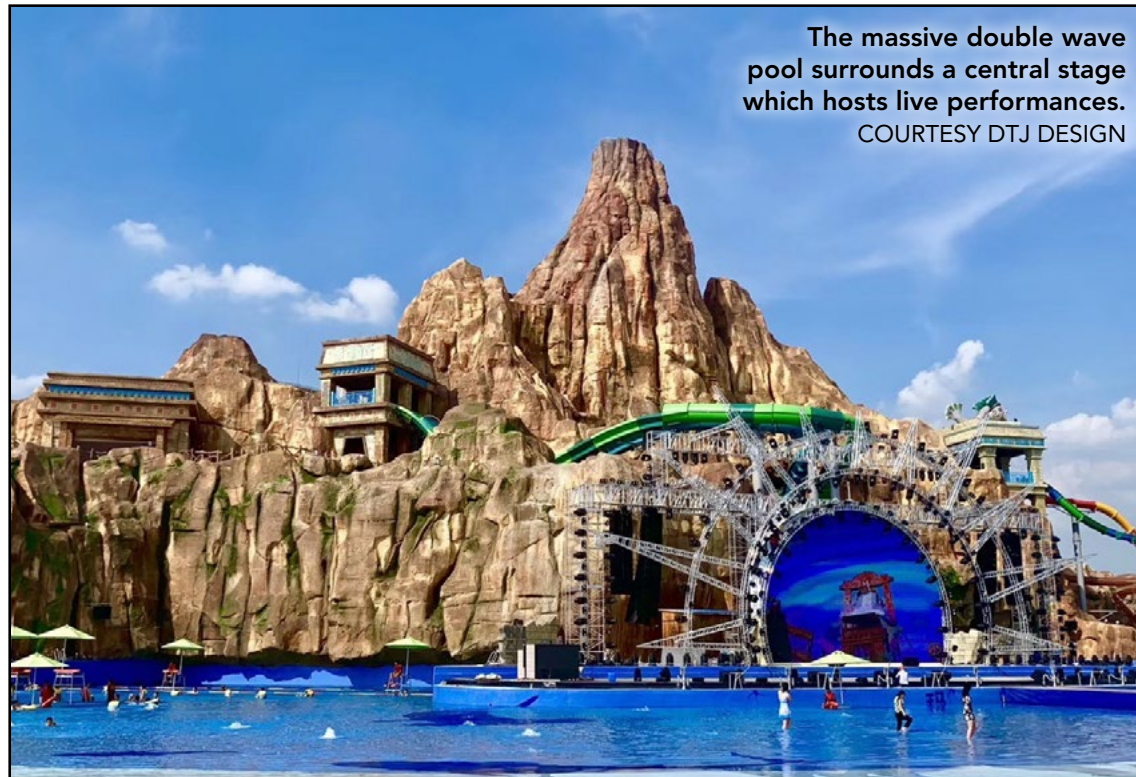
AT: Jeffrey Seifert  
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NANCHANG, China — The **Playa Maya Water Park** opened recently in Nanchang with an impressive array of attractions. Designed by **DTJ Designs** of Boulder, Colorado, and developed by **Overseas Chinese Town Enterprises (OCT)**, the 42-acre park includes creative Mayan theming with attractions surrounding and integrated with a 165-foot-tall central mountain.

OCT is known for its **Happy Valley** theme parks and Playa Maya water parks throughout China. However, this Playa Maya is not coupled with a Happy Valley amusement counterpart, therefore OCT wanted to push the envelope with what is typically done at a water park. OCT added attractions that are not often found at water parks — a ropes course, water bumper boats, and a shoot-the-chute. In addition, interactive caverns can be explored inside the mountain. The mountain also incorporates several performance plazas and a large central stage overlooking the dual wave pool.

OCT turned to well-known manufacturers **WhiteWater West** and **ProSlide** to provide a multitude of high-profile slides as well as local vendors for other attractions. The elaborately themed shoot-the-chute ride that travels up the side of the mountain was built by **Golden Horse** of Zhongshan, China.

One of the highlight water attractions is a **WhiteWater** dual Master Blaster water



The massive double wave pool surrounds a central stage which hosts live performances.  
COURTESY DTJ DESIGN

coaster that dives in and out of the mountain. Utilizing one- and two-person rafts, families and friends have the opportunity to race each other in side-by-side channels. The dual design has the added advantage of doubling the capacity of the water coaster. **WhiteWater** also supplied an **Anaconda Family** raft ride, four-flume raft ride slide complex, a six-lane **Whizzard** mat racer with open and enclosed sections, and a four-flume body slide complex that includes a **Freefall**, **AquaDrop** and dual **Aqua Loops**. The ropes course and water obstacle course are **Whitewater** products as well.

More high-profile attractions come from **ProSlide**, including a double **Tornado Wave** and **Tornado 60**. Guests in four-person cloverleaf rafts can choose from the double **Tornado Wave** and experi-

ence weightlessness twice as they climb two separate wave walls or experience the vortex thrills of a traditional **Tornado 60**. Both slides share the same tower complex and splashdown pool. A central raft lift services both rides so guests do not have to struggle carrying the rafts to the top of the ride tower.

Kids have their own areas in which to play starting with a Mayan-themed **WhiteWater RainWater Fortress AquaPlay** structure, dual kids slide play areas with slides from both **WhiteWater** and **ProSlide** and dual splashpad zones. While the two splashpads are geared to smaller tykes, the **AquaPlay** structure, with its tipping bucket and multiple interactive water features, can appeal to kids of all ages and every member of the family.

Four separate leisure pools scattered throughout the prop-

erty give the adults and parents an opportunity to enjoy the water in a relaxing atmosphere. Two rivers that meander around different sections of the property allow guests to ride along the river's current while lying on rafts. One of the rivers provides the typical gentle flow while the other is classified as an action river for a more exciting journey.

Surrounding the entire front side of the mountain is an 86,000-square-foot dual wave pool. With custom wave generating equipment on each side, guests can enjoy different wave experiences depending on which pool they enter. Where the two pools meet in the center — in front of the stage — the water remains relatively calm. Guests can float on a tube, wade into the water, or grab one of the many lounge chairs along the edge to enjoy the performance on the stage.

Depending on the time of day or the popularity of the performance, the entire wave pool area remains waveless so all the attention can be focused on the entertainment taking place on the central stage.

Several food and beverage outlets, as well as retail venues, are placed throughout the property including restaurants with terraces on the mountain. Raised terraces provide a scenic overview of the water park while guests enjoy traditional fast food or local favorites. A cavern-like restaurant allows diners to enjoy a meal in an indoor environment. A network of stairs and internal elevators in the central core of the mountain give guests access to the dining terrace, shops and restrooms that are incorporated into the mountain.

Nanchang is home to more than 5 million people and is the capital city of Jiangxi Province. Strategically located between south China and east China, it has become a major high-speed railway hub and aviation hub in recent decades. Several national highways cross through the city as do multiple navigable rivers crucial for water transit. These transportation networks bring a steady flow of visitors to the city with many seeking recreational opportunities. Established more than 2,200 years ago, Nanchang has many famous historical and cultural attractions along with beautiful natural scenery such as **Poyang Lake** — the largest fresh-water lake in China. The climate features short, cool winters and long, hot summers with plenty of sunshine, making it an ideal location for a large water park. OCT doubled many of the attractions in order to handle large crowds.

No doubt the park struggled during the 2020 world-wide pandemic, but with a wide variety of waterslides, a few atypical amusements, a large central stage, an ideal climate and a plethora of visitors, **Playa Maya Nanchang** should become a popular destination once life returns to normal.



The Mayan theme is present throughout the park with remarkable attention to detail. COURTESY DTJ DESIGN



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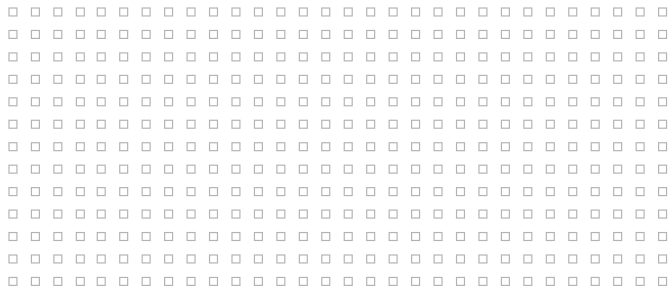
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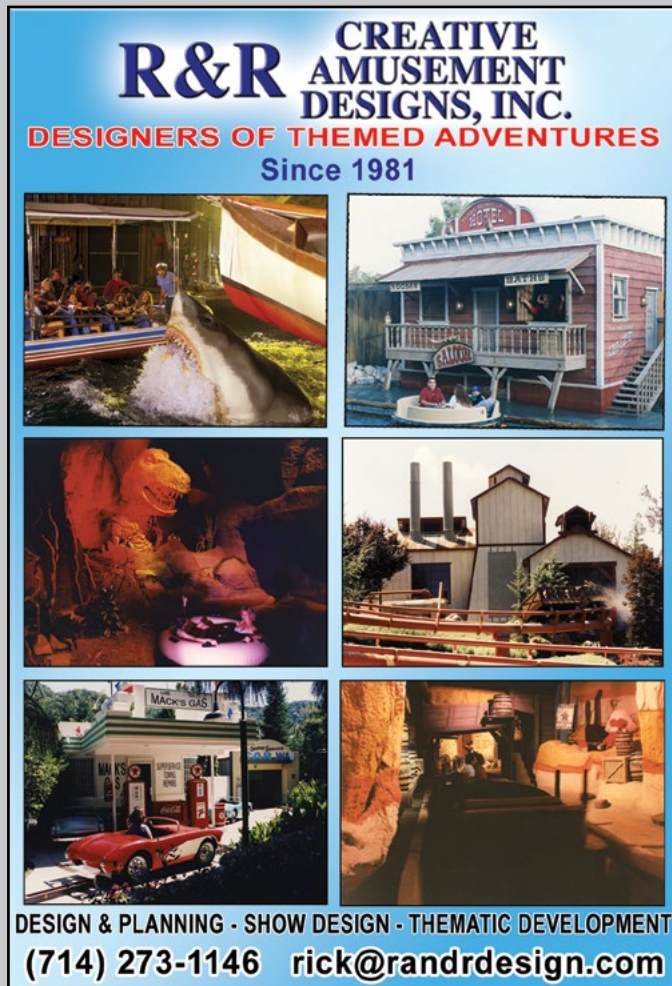
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## NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert  
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As tourism in Vietnam increases in popularity, the government has put forth an economic development plan to improve the country's tourism infrastructure.

A high-tech area, in eastern Ho Chi Minh City, dubbed Vietnam's Silicon Valley, is being developed as a new administrative region. Included within the mixed use community are leisure facilities with recreational opportunities. One such facility includes construction of a **WhiteWater West** ES3200 endless surf pool and beach area. With more than 1,800 miles of coastline on the Pacific Ocean, surfing has become very popular in Vietnam. But, as with all ocean surfing, waves can be unpredictable and the season is limited. An Endless Surf pool can provide a continuous supply of perfect waves all year round.

In addition to the surf pool, smaller lagoons will offer opportunities for kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding. A triple FlowRider will offer even more water sports activity.

"This development is a great example of how surf as an anchor attraction in larger mixed-use real estate investments creates a focus on lifestyle and wellness for the entire development. This added benefit comes in addition to the surf lagoon being a healthy business venue in its own right because of the high capacity and flexibility of the programmable waves that Endless Surf offers," said **Paul Chutter**, joint founder of Endless Surf.

**Hawaiian Falls** parks in Roanoke, Mansfield and Waco, Texas, extended the season past Labor Day. Following a delayed opening this year due to the global pandemic, the parks added bonus days on September 12 and 13 with discounted tickets for those days.

Hawaiian Falls Managing Director **Ryan Forson** indicated that Hawaiian Falls wanted to give its season pass holders and loyal guests more opportunities to gather as a family and create memories.

The city of West Plains, Missouri, recently released two designs for a splash pad to be built at **Butler Children's Park**. The city has asked the community to weigh in on the designs and choose their favorite. The options offer different themes — music or baseball — each paying homage to local figures of the city who went on to become famous.

The size of the new splash pad will be about 50 feet by 50 feet. The city gave designers a price range of \$200,000 to \$250,000 to stay within.

The plan is to have the attraction in place by next summer. There is no admission charge for children to enter Butler Children's Park or to use the splash pad.

A new aquatic center in Richmond, British Columbia, opened September 15 with limited capacity. The aquatic center at the **Minoru Centre for Active Living** was supposed to open in August. Construction problems, including a crack in one of the lap pools, were compounded by several lawsuits and counter lawsuits over who was to blame for the delays.

The aquatic center features a 7,000-square-foot leisure pool with a tipping bucket, a rapid-flowing river channel, a slide and an intermittent rain cloud shower. There is also an over-water climbing wall, a drop slide and a diving board.

Two 25-meter lap pools with 14 lanes will allow for recreational and lane swimming, as well as aquafit classes. The center also boasts of having one of the largest hot tubs in all of Canada.

The aquatic center along with a seniors center and fitness center comprise Minoru Centre for Active Living. The seniors center opened in March 2019 but closed a year later due to the pandemic and remains closed. The fitness center opened at the end of August.

Glendale, Arizona, could be home to a new **Crystal Lagoons** development. In September the city council voted to approve the Crystal Lagoons, Island Resort project. The primary feature will be an 11-acre public access lagoon up to 10 feet deep filled with beautiful turquoise water and lined with white sand beaches. Crystal Lagoons is a world leader in water innovation and technology, using state-of-the-art filtration and water treatment systems to efficiently maintain excellent water quality in large bodies of water at very low costs.

Plans for the Island Resort include a 630-room hotel, amusement park rides, an **Aerophiles** Aerobar that takes guests 130 feet in the air while enjoying food and drink, a 4D theater, a 400-foot helium balloon ride, office space, retail shops, restaurants and bars.

A long-sought-after water park near **Zoo Miami** is expected to finally come to fruition. Miami-Dade county commissioners and developer **Miami Wilds, LLC**, have agreed to terms, and the county was expected to approve the project. Miami Wilds park is a \$99 million project that includes a water park, 200-room hotel, military museum, railroad museum, eateries and retail.

Specific attractions for the water park have not yet been decided, but it is to include a lazy river, wave pools, multiple waterslides, kiddie pool and lounging area with shady landscapes.

The project provides for \$14 million to \$15 million in improvements to the zoo parking area, including lighting, signage, security and drainage. However, that will come at a cost. Parking at the zoo will no longer be free, but the county has set a cap at \$9 per vehicle, allowing for adjustments to counter inflation.

The **Hyatt Regency Indian Wells Resort & Spa** in Indian Wells, California, opened its \$8 million **HyTydes Plunge Waterpark** in time for Labor Day Weekend. The water park includes a new lazy river, dual 30-foot-high dualing waterslides, kids' splash pad with a third waterslide for children who are not tall enough to ride the larger slides. The kids' area also includes dumping buckets, fountains, water cannons and other amenities.



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# BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► IAAPA Expo 2020 canceled — page 36 / Intamin co-founder Robert Spieldiener passes — page 39

## Zebe's success remains a family business across the generations

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

FAIRFIELD, Ohio — **Zebe's Water Sports** was incorporated in 1994. In the quarter century since, the family company has grown to supply a wide variety of water park equipment such as rafts, tubes, mats, floats and more. Today it is a leader in the water park industry.

The business was conceived by two brothers — **Chris and Scott Snyder** — and their father Ed.

The term “zebe” is defined as a three-masted Mediterranean ship. Chris Snyder can't recall who came up with the name. “Since there were three of us, it kind of fit,” he said.

When the company began, the water park industry was not as big as it is in the 21st century. Many of Zebe's original customers were campgrounds with concrete slides.

“It was a lot of work. We thought, ‘Ooo, what a fun business.’ We didn't know what we were getting into,” Snyder laughed.

Originally, Zebe was envisioned as a second income, a sideline business. As it turned out, it became vastly popular — and needed as the water park industry rapidly grew.

“When we originally started, I was a full-time machinist, and Scott was full time in the military. We worked on this [new business] part time and a lot of late hours — unbelievable hours.”

The original idea of a supplemental income and a little bit of “fun” was quickly replaced by a big demand. Parks and manufacturers needed slide equipment and vehicles.

“As it grew and took off, we had no idea what we would get into. By the late 1990s, I decided I couldn't do both anymore. I had to make a decision; I couldn't serve two masters,”



Family fun has been the family business at Zebe's Water Sports for more than 25 years. The company is the leading supplier in water park equipment including rafts, tubes, mats, floats and more. COURTESY ZEBEC

Snyder said.

As Zebe began manufacturing more products needed by the booming industry, family ties continued to remain strong.

“My brother and I were always close. The business brought us even closer together,” said Snyder.

Scott's daughter, **Danielle Koroschetz**, had been working in the family business since being in college. Today, she is a third generation of the family that remains heavily involved.

“My main day to day focus is customer service — fielding emails and phone calls, communicating with our customers in regard to their needs, processing orders and just providing the best customer service I am able to,” commented Koroschetz on her role. “I began working at Zebe on the heels of my dad's retirement from the military. Being able to work with my dad on a daily basis was wonderful.”

Over time, some things have not changed.

“It's a competitive industry,” Snyder said. “Marketing is always a challenge. We want to keep up with the changing trends and maintain the high quality.”

When asked to reflect on the last 25-plus years, Snyder told *Amusement Today*: “Over

the years, the industry has really evolved. You have to be in continuous contact with slide manufacturers. They often specify what type of vehicle is needed on a ride. They are constantly innovating. We have to try to keep up with them so that our [product] meets their specifications and requirements for their rides.”

There is always an appreciation when Zebe's products are used on especially “cool” projects. And some fun ones come to the company from time to time.

“Every once in a while, we get some really strange and bizarre requests,” he said. “We made a 40-foot-tall shark fin for the Discovery Channel they used for ‘Shark Week’ one year.”

Snyder points out the company meets client requests beyond just inflatable water park equipment.

“We build other products for water parks and family entertainment centers. FECs will come to us for impact and safety padding. We make tubes for bumper cars and bumper boats. Cargo climb netting and barrier netting are also something we provide,” he said.

AT asked about the impacts of COVID-19. “This year has been very challenging for everyone in this industry,”



Snyder said. “There are still a lot of parks that were not able to open, and those that did had limited capacity. It has been difficult for everyone. There aren't too many ways to put that. It's been challenging.”

The global health crisis canceled the bulk of the trade shows for 2020. While understanding the reasoning, Snyder notes that he misses them.

“The international expos are interesting. For the Asia show, we actually have an office in China, so the language barrier is not an issue. A large percentage of people in China speak English anyway, and in Europe, most do. Language is not a big barrier. Some of the customs and set up can be challenging, but I look forward to going to them.”

The family business suffered an emotional blow when Scott Snyder lost his battle to cancer in December 2018. Chris still finds it difficult to speak of his brother.

“It's tough. It was really nice being able to work with my brother every single day,” he said. “That's what I miss the most. We didn't just work together. We lived on the same street within two miles of each other. When we weren't at work, we were doing things

after work. We'd go on motorcycle trips together. Our families would get together on the weekends. We were close.”

“What I admired most about my dad is that he was willing to do anything for anyone, at any time,” said Koroschetz. “He was the first person to lend a hand to someone in need, from something as simple as a car ride or monetary help. He was my best friend and we spent tons of time together. Heck, we ran a full marathon together after he finished chemo; that is how I determined he was to be with me at the finish line.”

The family continues to remain close through all the generations. Snyder says his own children now work in the office.

“I've enjoyed working with the family and simply eating lunch together daily,” said Koroschetz. “Apart from the family aspect, I really love the industry; it's fun, it's unique and unlike any industry I had imagined working within.”

“I'm a very honest person and we are a family company. We stand behind our products. We treat our customers like family the best we can. We go out of our way to accommodate people,” Snyder said.

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# ProParks benefit from Innovative Attraction Management merger

**AT:** Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Orlando-based **ProParks Attractions Group** became stronger with the recent 2020 merger of **Pro Parks Management Company** and **Innovative Attraction Management (IAM)**. The combined platform allowed the two companies to work with the strengths of the other to where the joined effort was greater than the sum of its parts.

**Mike Frischa** was president of IAM. He now serves as SVP of operations for ProParks. "IAM was that industry consulting group for amusement facilities — both on the operating side and management side," he said.



**Frischa**

But now combined with the ProParks group, we are now able to be owner-operators, which is something we wanted to do since starting IAM."

"We started ProParks to build a small platform to capitalize on those mid-sized attractions," said **Curt Caffey**, president, ProParks.

"Having the [good] fortune to merge with IAM ... we have the ability to run small, medium and large parks and do a lot of acquisitions activity."



**Caffey**

ProParks services are multifaceted. They own and operate parks, but at the same time offer third-party management services to



**Cowabunga Bay is one of the water parks under ProParks management.**  
COURTESY COWABUNGA BAY

bring operational expertise to other partners by helping them develop a facility's customer experience. Another branch offers strategic consulting services.

"What's exciting for me — because of what is happening in the world and how we are positioned as a company — we feel there are opportunities for us to bring more attractions into our portfolio," Frischa told *Amusement Today*. "We are looking to be that conduit for folks who are looking to change or perhaps [exit] the business and try to help them through this."

"It's a real challenge as to reimagine what 'normal' looks like going forward," added Caffey. "Most of the park operators we've talked to are down this year — whether it be government [restrictions] or customers not having the confidence to return — but in our world we like to take a long-term perspective, looking out 10

or 20 years. We might be able to help a family who owns a park transition out of the ownership business and help a park merge with another group or our group."

Water parks and family entertainment centers are the primary focus of the company. ProParks properties range from small FECs such as **Funtasticks** in Charlotte, North Carolina, to managing large water parks such as **Cowabunga Bay** in Las Vegas.

In addition to the ownership and operation of various attractions and water parks, ProParks also shares a passion for establishing fun and safe experiences through its affiliate, **StarGuard Elite**, a risk prevention services company. Through education, training and audit services, StarGuard Elite provides a complete aquatic risk prevention and lifeguard training system to more than 300 clients worldwide.

"We're very connected to quite a few folks in the indus-

try," said Caffey. "We have conversations with them and see how we may be able to help. We're not empire build-

ers. We'd like to come out of this year with two or three new, nice assets to help build our portfolio. We want to be a great attractions company that does things the right way."

One of the key aspects Caffey is proud of is the company's advisory branch.

"Something we do for our clients when we aren't an owner or provide management services is helping people maximize their profitability," he said. "Within our group we have well over 100 years of experience operating small, medium and large parks. I'm certain people come out of this year thinking, 'How do we maximize 2021?' Helping someone think through that would be one of our strengths."

•proparksmangement.com

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ProParks owns and operates, as well as manages, FECs and water parks such as Hawaiian Falls. COURTESY PROPARKS



# Women INFLUENCE

## A view from the top...

**Cathy Lawson** has been in the water park industry since 2009, but she has had a love for aquatics her entire life. It started with her love of swimming. Then at the age of 12, she landed a spot on a swim team in her hometown of Phoenix, Arizona.

Today she is the general manager of **Wings & Waves Waterpark** and an avid supporter of the water park industry.

## Accomplishments and affiliations...

- Member, World Waterpark Association (WWA)
- Instructor/trainer, Ellis & Associates

## Lawson's love of water guides her

McMINNVILLE, Ore. — Looking back, Cathy Lawson's official move into the water park industry in 2009 seems almost happenstance.

Yes, she had had a true passion for aquatics her entire life starting with the simple activity of swimming. She participated on a swim team in her hometown of Phoenix, Arizona, and later became a lifeguard.

"I went to school, and during the summers, I was a lifeguard," Lawson said. "I went to college and was a lifeguard during the summer. I taught school and was a lifeguard during the summer."

She attended and received a degree from Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, to teach high school English, which she did for 15 years in Phoenix. But she never veered far from the water. Before her tenure as a teacher was over, she had become the City of Phoenix swimming pool manager. It just seemed like a natural part of her life.

"When you find your passion, you go for it," she said.

That go-for-it part of her life actually took more shape in 2009. Her husband at that time was an independent contractor in Phoenix and was hired to work on renovations, additions and upgrades at the the Wet 'n Wild water park there. The park had just changed hands and the new park owners had big plans for the facility. While on site, he overheard a discussion about the need for an operations manager.

"He told them, 'you know, my wife would be really good for that job,'" she said. "I applied."

And got the job, leaving her high school teaching career of 15 years behind. There was no second thought. She took that leap right into the water, but this time it was full time.

Of course, it was a little different. Right away she was put in charge of aquatics, hiring and training 225 lifeguards. But Lawson figured it

out quickly. She had been training lifeguards for years.

"And I was blessed to have had such a great mentor at the time," she said, speaking of Rick Belhumeur, who was the director of operations at the time.

She said in that first year, she did things his way. Her second year on the job, she went to him and said, "Okay, we have done it your way. Can we now try it my way."

"He was brave enough to let me go," she said. "His faith in me was a big reason I was able to grow into the park."

She stayed at the Phoenix Wet 'n Wild for six years, eventually working into Belhumeur's job as director of operations after he left.

She found her teaching career had given her many useful skills.

"But the dynamics also had changed," she said. "I had to learn not to be so teachery. That didn't translate so well into that environment."

She learned the importance of continuing to grow as an employer. She found it exciting to work with the goal in mind of wanting employees to come back the next summer. Not all did, but she enjoyed watching them find their own passions.

She had three sons and she watched them do the same.

She became interested in the industry as a whole. She became a part of the WWA and learned instantly the role of the organization and how much safety was prioritized. She still volunteers regularly to instruct at the association's convention.

In 2015, she was given the opportunity to transfer to the Wet 'n Wild in Las Vegas, Nevada. She started out as the director of operations there and soon moved into the job of general manager.

She was there until 2018 when she was approached by Ken Handler, now owner and president of Global



## Cathy Lawson

General Manager  
**Wings & Waves Waterpark**  
McMinnville, Ore.

Management Amusement Professional (GMAP), a consulting firm to parks.

He asked her if she would be interested in going to Seven Peaks Water Park in Provo, Utah, to help with renovations and reopening of that park.

He didn't have to ask her twice. The facility stayed closed in 2018, but reopened the next year with multiple upgrades and with Lawson as general manager.

"This was a very exciting opportunity," she said. "I got to help put that park back into operation."

After the 2019 season, Seven Peaks changed hands again. It was rebranded and renamed Splash Summit Water Park.

That change gave Lawson a chance to step back and away for a few months, having been on a pretty fast track for 10 years. She spent some time traveling and being with her family.

But opportunity knocked again. She loves opening those doors almost as much as she does having her own black line on the bottom of the pool as she swims over it.

This time it led her to fill the position of general manager at the indoor water

park, Wings & Waves Waterpark, McMinnville, Oregon, on the campus of the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum, home to the Spruce Goose.

Much like the Seven Peaks project, this venue had seen some difficult times and needed repairs and updates. It changed ownership in April of this year. In May, Lawson was on the job.

The water park hasn't open this year due to health concerns with COVID-19, but Lawson said they have worked feverishly to be ready when it does.

"This is a very cool place," she said. "There are not too many places where there is a 747 sitting on the top of a building."

Lawson loves her job. She loves the industry and the dedication she has witnessed from so many that are truly driven by safety, excellence and, of course, fun.

"When you see the guests coming in and loving what they are doing and creating life memories and you are taking part in that, there is nothing else so rewarding."

Except, maybe, for those dives into the water.

—Pam Sherborne





## VR ROUNDUP

AT: Dean Lamanna  
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

Among the latest major trade show casualties of the COVID-19 pandemic is the **Consumer Electronics Show** (CES). The planned 2021 edition of the sprawling Las Vegas convention, which usually produces 250-plus conference sessions and attracts more than 170,000 attendees from around the globe every winter, will be replaced by an all-digital event set to run Jan. 11-14.

Show organizer **Consumer Technology Assn.** (CTA) said that "it's just not possible to safely convene tens of thousands of people... to meet and do business in person." The virtual presentation of CES, per CTA, will allow participants to hear from technology innovators and engage with global brands and startups, as well as view cutting-edge technologies and the latest electronic and VR product launches.

The **Fourth International VR Awards**, in keeping with the need for physical distancing, will be presented remotely this fall. Organized by **The Academy of International Extended Reality**, the award ceremony will be "virtualcast" through the social VR platform **VRChat** on Nov. 12. Finalists in various categories, including VR hardware, games, experiences and out-of-home entertainment, were announced in early July.

**Bandai Namco** announced in late August that it was shuttering its acclaimed VR arcade **Mazaria** in the Tokyo ward of Toshima after a year of operation. The four-story attraction, which featured the Pac-Man Challenge VR experience, had four amusement zones appealing to families.

Earlier, **Sega** announced it was ceasing operation of its own pop culture-based gaming venue in the city's Akihabara district, a hub of retail, electronics and entertainment. Business disruption caused by the pandemic reportedly led to the closures.

Award-winning Marina Del Rey, California-based VR producer **Spaces**, which made a name for itself offering *Terminator*-themed experiences at several malls and theme parks stateside and abroad, saw its location-based business decimated by the pandemic earlier this year. The startup has since shifted its focus to introducing a video communication software called *Spaces* — a VR-powered entry into the burgeoning teleconference technology market. The app, which saw more than 6,000 downloads during the first month of its release, enhances participation in meetings conducted via **Zoom**, **Skype** and similar teleconferencing portals.

*Spaces* recently was acquired by **Apple**, which reportedly has been exploring VR and augmented reality.

According to reports that began surfacing in July, the pandemic-shuttered VR experience venues operated by **The Void** in Anaheim at **Disneyland Resort's Downtown Disney District** and in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, at **Walt Disney World Resort's Disney Springs** retailtainment complex may not be returning. (The company's website listed the locations as "temporarily closed" as of mid-September even as their host properties had largely reopened.)

The Void offers high-end, free-roaming VR experiences based on several **Walt Disney Co.**-owned franchises. The Lindon, Utah-based start-

up joined Disney's accelerator program in 2017.

Further illustrating the damage the pandemic has visited upon the VR attractions sector, **Glostation USA, Inc.**, the U.S. subsidiary of **Sandbox VR**, has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Sandbox, which was founded in 2016 and has enjoyed more than \$80 million in outside funding from various sources and celebrities, including **Orlando Bloom**, **Katy Perry**, **Will Smith** and **Justin Timberlake**, has lost 100% of its revenue and laid off 80% of its staff since the start of the shutdown.

With locations in North America and Asia, Sandbox VR features both branded VR content (e.g., *Star Trek: Discovery*) and games it creates in-house. The attractions offer experiences lasting about 20 minutes for up to six participants.

Shanghai-based mixed reality (MR) leisure destination concept **Planet O** has announced a strategic partnership with **NetEase Games**, a leading PC-client and mobile games provider in China. The partnership will be fulfilled through a joint venture between Planet O and **NetVios**, a subsidiary of NetEase focused exclusively on the location-based VR gaming pipeline — bringing titles such as *Raw Data*, *Creed*, *Beat Saber* and forthcoming IPs (including **HBO's Westworld**) to Planet O's location-based entertainment platform.

Planet O's venue concept features VR and MR games powered by proprietary smart-facility technology, enabling players to transform an individual gaming experience into a sharable, fun-filled spectacle. The concept incorporates 360-degree immersive media projections, fast-casual dining, bars, private party rooms and more. The first entertainment center is expected to open in Shanghai by the end of this year.

Banking on recovery in the location-based VR sector next year, **Ubisoft**, headquartered in Montreuil, France, has released initial details on a new eight-player VR arcade experience called *Far Cry VR: Dive into Insanity*. The game takes place in the Rock Islands, which also served as the setting for Ubisoft's *Far Cry 3*. Pursued by a villain named Vaas and his henchmen, players will explore the island chain and collaborate in a fight for survival. The new experience will debut in 2021 in venues operated by **Zero Latency**, which has 45-plus locations in 22 countries.

**Topgolf Media**, a division of global sports and entertainment leader **Topgolf Entertainment Group** of Dallas, has linked with Austin, Texas-based **Golf Scope** to introduce *Pro Putt* by Topgolf on **Oculus Quest**. The collaboration combines several VR enhancement technologies, including Golf Scope and **Simply Putting**, to create the sensation of playing on realistic golf courses via four different Topgolf fan favorite games: *Topgolf Classic*, *Top Pressure*, *Quick 9* and *Quick 9 Pro*.

By wearing Oculus Quest headsets and touch controllers equipped with insight tracking, users can swing, putt and play as a single player, with friends or with players from the global *Pro Putt* by Topgolf community. Available online in the Oculus Quest store, *Pro Putt* joins Topgolf's collection of digital games, which includes the popular online game *World Golf Tour*.



Belmont Park as seen in the mid-1900s (inset) and in recent times.  
COURTESY BELMONT PARK

## Belmont Park notches 95

### Legacy Entertainment offers a vision for the San Diego landmark's future

AT: Dean Lamanna  
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

SAN DIEGO — Like virtually every other fun spot during the pandemic, **Belmont Park** launched its 2020 spring / summer season with limited offerings — its zipline, ropes course and rock-climbing wall have been among the few outdoor attractions permitted to operate. So its 95th anniversary on July 4 passed rather quietly.

The Mission Beach amusement zone and its iconic wooden roller coaster, *Giant Dipper*, a National Historic Landmark designed by **Frank Prior** and **Frederick Church**, was completed in 1925 for \$2.5 million by the entrepreneurial family of **John D. Spreckels**, the son of a sugar magnate. Originally intended as a promotional tool for land sales, the park also featured a carousel, a funhouse and a massive indoor saltwater pool known today as *The Plunge*. Ownership of the property was transferred to the city in 1954, and since then it has seen periods of growth and decline as well as a series of leaseholders (currently, **Pacifica Enterprises**).

Belmont Park has resurged in popularity since its return 30 years ago from an extended period of disrepair, adding new rides and restaurants and, in 2019, completing a \$12 million renovation of *The Plunge*. And it has continued to seek ways to improve while paying homage to its history.

**Taylor Jeffs**, president and chief creative officer of North Hollywood, Calif.-based **Legacy Entertainment**, observed to *Amusement Today* that Belmont Park's basic look "has remained largely unchanged" since its reopening in 1990. More recently, his award-winning attraction design firm has collaborated with the park to explore a possible updating that would bring the midway into the 21st century while honoring San Diego's past.

"Belmont Park reopened when I was seven years old, and I've visited every year since," said Jeffs. "Having an extremely strong emotional connection to the park, getting the concept right felt like an extremely weighty responsibility."

Reimagining the park's midway through renderings, Legacy's designers identified over a dozen beloved San Diego architectural landmarks which no longer exist and could be recreated in rich detail — freeing the "incredible unlocked potential" of the park.

"Every retail developer in the country is looking for the silver bullet to the dying-mall crisis, and I believe a hybrid of retail and a boutique theme park may be a potent solution," said Jeffs. "Belmont Park has all the ingredients to realize this idea, so it will be exciting to see what the coming years hold."

•belmontpark.com



Suggesting one possible direction for a future Belmont Park updating, Legacy Entertainment's concept art pays homage to San Diego's history and vintage architecture.  
COURTESY LEGACY ENTERTAINMENT



# IAAPA cancels IAAPA Expo 2020 in Orlando due to COVID-19

ORLANDO — IAAPA, the global association for the attractions industry, announced the cancellation of IAAPA Expo 2020 in Orlando, Florida. In addition, the association is launching a new virtual conference for global attractions industry professionals so that they can take part in many of the education sessions originally planned to take place at IAAPA Expo.

"IAAPA Expo serves as the global marketplace for the attractions industry. We recognize this year there are many challenges facing our members from around the world," said **Hal McEvoy**, president and CEO, IAAPA. "Together with input from members, exhibitors, the IAAPA Board of Directors and our team, we have decided to cancel this year's Expo due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. The continuing barriers to international and domestic travel coupled with the evolving guidance on mass gatherings, and members' need to focus on their businesses helped lead to this decision."

Parks planning to attend IAAPA Expo 2020 weren't surprised by the decision to cancel.

The colorful exhibits and displays of IAAPA Expo 2020 will not be lighting up the Orange County Convention Center in November. IAAPA has canceled this year's Expo. AT/TIM BALDWIN



"Based on the continuing concerns worldwide related to the COVID virus, IAAPA certainly made the correct decision in canceling this year's expo in Orlando," stated officials from **Quassy Amusement Park** of Middlebury, Connecticut. "As much as we enjoy being there for all that the week has to offer, Quassy had determined during the summer that our attendance would be curtailed, if the park was even going to be represented at all."

Exhibitors and suppliers had also begun to adjust their plans with fears that IAAPA Expo 2020 would be canceled. **Premier Rides, Larson International, Chance Rides** and **Great Coasters International, Inc.**, announced in a joint-release in early

August that they would not be exhibiting at IAAPA Expo 2020 at all, if it even occurred.

"I certainly respect that the decision to cancel the IAAPA Expo was an extremely difficult one, much like the decisions on the Macau and London shows. They did the right thing as the operators made it clear they weren't going to attend and that the sales aspects that the Expo represents were not a priority compared to the survival of their businesses," offered Jim Seay, president and owner of Premier Rides. "I had hoped for an earlier decision that would have limited the financial impact for exhibitors, especially those outside the U.S., as the preparation costs in the months leading up to

the show are very significant.

"The suppliers know that they represent the majority of the revenue that funds IAAPA's operations so having no shows will result in difficult times for the organization much like the operators and suppliers have been going through. More than ever it will be important for all parties to work closely together to facilitate the amusement industries biggest comeback in history."

At this time, IAAPA Expo 2021 is moving ahead with its planning.

"While we are disappointed we are unable to meet in person this year, we are already looking ahead to IAAPA Expo 2021 in Orlando," stated McEvoy, "We also appreciate the patience, sup-

port and commitment from our dedicated IAAPA Expo exhibitors. The IAAPA team has already pivoted to address finding new ways industry manufacturers and suppliers can connect with their customers to promote their products, discover new trends, and make plans for the future."

Current contracted IAAPA Expo 2020 exhibitors should contact the IAAPA Global Sales Team at [ExhibitSales@IAAPA.org](mailto:ExhibitSales@IAAPA.org) to discuss options related to the cancellation and next steps.

IAAPA plans to host IAAPA Expo Asia 2021, scheduled to take place in Macao, China, June 7-10, IAAPA Expo Europe 2021 in Barcelona, Spain, Sept. 28-30, 2021, and IAAPA Expo 2021 in Orlando, Florida, Nov. 16-19, 2021.

IAAPA Expo Virtual Education Conference will take place November 16-18, the same week IAAPA Expo was originally planned for. Participants will be able to virtually attend 25 sessions and two keynote presentations. These sessions were part of IAAPA Expo's conference program and will feature leading industry professionals.

•[iaapa.org](http://iaapa.org)

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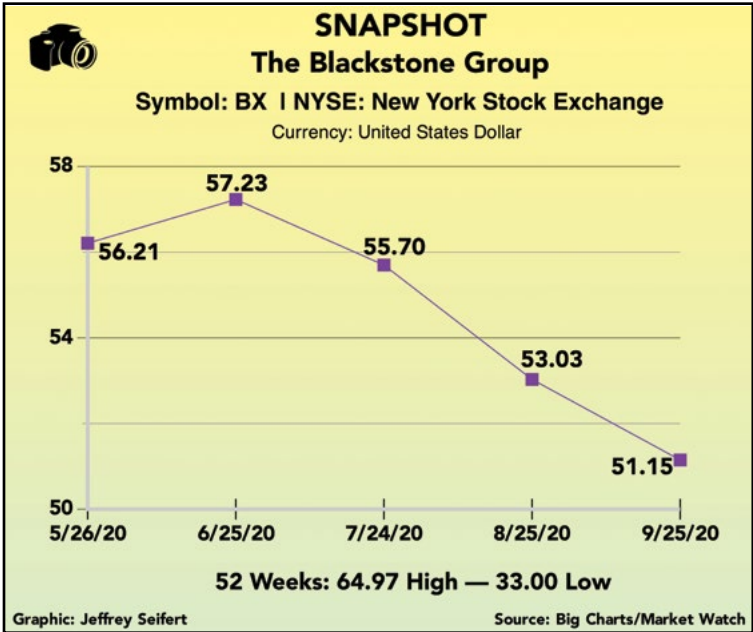
MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 09/23/20	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	50.79	64.97	33.00
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	27.79	64.86	13.00
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	45.36	47.74	31.70
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	123.28	153.41	79.07
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.13	0.23	0.09
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	26.62	79.80	12.55
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	3945.00	4815.00	2080.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.46	1.20	0.38
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	18.50	18.80	9.08
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	21.38	34.63	5.90
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	61.24	135.31	19.25
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	674.00	1029.00	490.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	19.11	36.96	6.75
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	21.38	53	8.75
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	646.00	788.00	550.00
Village Roadshow	AU:VRL	ASX	2.09	4.10	0.77

STOCK PRICES ABOVE ARE GENERALLY QUOTED IN THE FOREIGN CURRENCY IN WHICH THE COMPANY IS LOCATED

**Worldwide Markets:** **ASX**, Australian Securities Exchange; **CSE**, Copenhagen Stock Exchange; **LSE**, London Stock Exchange; **NYSE**, New York Stock Exchange; **NASDAQ**, National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; **SEHK**, Hong Kong Stock Exchange; **SZSE**, Shenzhen Stock Exchange; **TSEC**, Taiwan Stock Exchange, Corp.; **TYO/TSE**, Tokyo Stock Exchange  
—SOURCES: Bloomberg.com; Wall Street Journal

Attendance at Walt Disney World Resort's theme parks is steadily increasing since reopening in July 2020.  
COURTESY ORLANDO SENTINAL



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 09/21/20	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$2.486	-\$0.597
Midwest	\$2.282	-\$0.710
Gulf Coast	\$2.157	-\$0.701
Mountain	\$2.348	-\$0.686
West Coast	\$2.557	-\$0.681
California	\$3.257	-\$0.719

CURRENCY

On 09/23/20 \$1 USD =	
0.8521	EURO
0.7826	GBP (British Pound)
104.73	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9170	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.3895	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3309	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

TDI/Deltrain enter North American market

WARWICKSHIRE, U.K. — Despite the current difficulties being experienced by all industry sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UK-based **TDI Production Solutions**, in partnership with transport specialist **Deltrain** of Portugal, have announced their successful entry into the North American attractions market with a number of new projects in 2020.

The orders received involve a total of 12 land trains, seven of which are battery powered. The first of these, the Tagus, was delivered to **Guadalajara Zoo** in Mexico in January this year to replace original trains bought in the 1990s. A second delivery was to **Toronto Zoo** which is now home to four Tagus Euro 6 diesel trains, each pulling three of Deltrain's new 28-seat carriages.

**Northwest Trek** (NWT), located south of Seattle, has also benefitted from the addition of new land trains. These replaced the site's existing diesel trams with six new Vision electric land trains. As NWT is a wildlife park, the new trains have been adapted to be heated and used all year round to provide the perfect platform for passengers taking photographs of the animals on route. A fourth delivery was also completed in 2020, this time to **Albuquerque Biopark**. It consisted of an Electric Delga with three open carriages. The biopark opted for a western-style power car to match the heritage of the area but with the latest battery power unit as part of the city's drive towards eco-friendly transport systems.

Gold Medal introduces ready-to-eat popcorn

CINCINNATI, Ohio — Concession equipment source and supplier, **Gold Medal Products Co.** has officially launched its retail-ready prepackaged gourmet popcorn line. Gold Medal's most popular signature gourmet popcorn recipes are now available to retailers, concession stands, and other venues in a variety of flavors and sizes. This news comes as many stores and venues are now opting to serve more prepackaged food items.

"Throughout our 89-year history, Gold Medal has earned a reputation for excellence in the popcorn industry and we are excited to now bring that same unmistakable quality to our ready-to-eat gourmet popcorn line," says Gold Medal President **Adam Browning**.

The products are also Kosher and Halal-certified and are gluten-free. Packaging options include a convenient grab-and-go size, larger retail size, and bulk. One of the distinguishing features is that the popcorn is wet popped, which means the kernels are popped in specially designed oils and seasonings for maximum flavor. In addition, to promote a rich coating, the popcorn is gently mixed in an artisan fashion rather than a commercial spray-on method.

Gateway Ticketing is solution for Loopagoon

GILBERTSVILLE, Pa. — **Loopagoon**, the world's first water park exclusively for women, opened in September 2020 in partnership with **Prologic First Dubai** and the Galaxy Ticketing and Guest Experience solution provided by **Gateway Ticketing Systems**. The attraction, situated in Dana Bay, Saudi Arabia, is also the first major water park of its kind in the Eastern Province of that country.

Loopagoon initially approached Prologic First Dubai, Gateway Ticketing's partner in the Middle East, in need of a single vendor with a complete solution to handle their operational needs. Ultimately they chose Prologic and Gateway's Galaxy Ticketing and Guest Experience solution due to its feature set and its ability to unify most operational functions.

"They are a valuable addition to our client base in this region, and it was a proud moment for us to implement an integrated solution for the first water park in the world exclusively for women," stated **Amit Sharda**, vice president at Gateway partner and reseller Prologic. "First Dubai is excited to partner with Loopagoon. We are delighted to support this unique concept of the park and believe that fun and learning should be comfortably available to everybody."

"We're also very proud to be part of opening an historic park such as Loopagoon," added **Peter Wolf**, director of sales and marketing for Gateway.



## ON THE MOVE

**Stewart Clark** has left his position as president of **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay** to assume a corporate role as senior vice president of zoo commercial operations for the park's parent company, **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment**, in Orlando. He will oversee zoological activities and experiences for all of the company's seven theme parks and five water parks. In addition to emphasizing SeaWorld's 50 years of animal rescue, Clark will be looking to create new educational animal experiences for guests. During his three-year tenure with Busch Gardens, he opened new roller coasters and guided the property through its return to operation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Clark was part of the **SeaWorld Orlando** team that in 2000 opened **Discovery Cove**, a tropical nature theme park where guests can swim with dolphins.



Clark

Madrid-based **Parques Reunidos Group** has tapped **Pascal Ferracci** as its new CEO. Ferracci most recently served as CEO of Netherlands-headquartered holiday village operator **Center Parcs Europe**, a business unit of **Pierre & Vacances** of France, where he started his career 20 years ago as deputy CFO and held various leadership positions within the company. Interim CEO **Jesús Fernández**, who had been instrumental in leading Parques Reunidos Group for several months, has returned to his former role as COO.



Ferracci

**MGM Resorts Intl.** has named **William J. Hornbuckle** CEO and president. Hornbuckle, a highly respected gaming industry veteran and a graduate of the **University of Nevada**,

had been serving the Las Vegas-based global entertainment company as acting CEO and president since March. He succeeds former Chairman and CEO **Jim Murren**. At the time of his latest appointment, Hornbuckle was also executive director and board chairman of **MGM China Holdings**, with operations in Macau. In addition, he was board chairman of **CityCenter JV** (a joint venture with **Dubai World**) and is a member of the **Las Vegas Stadium Authority** board. Previously, Hornbuckle served as chief marketing officer of MGM Resorts Intl. and, over the years, as COO and president of the company's **Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino**, **MGM Grand Las Vegas** and **Caesars Palace Las Vegas**, among other properties.



Hornbuckle

Cincinnati-based custom scenic fabrication shop **3dx**, specializing in large-format printing, robotic digital sculpting, fiberglass and more, has welcomed **Mark Rosenzweig** to its team as senior account executive. Rosenzweig brings more than 20 years of experience in the attractions industry, with roles in amusement ride sales, marketing, park operations and amusement ride operator training/certification — building associations with **Cedar Fair**, **Six Flags**, **Herschend Family Entertainment**, **SeaWorld**, **Merlin Entertainments** and **Parques Reunidos**, among other companies and attractions worldwide. He previously served as managing director of **Skycoaster** and the financial partnership division at **Ride Entertainment**, and, from 1999-2006, worked in sales and marketing at **Zamperla**.



Rosenzweig

## Park leader, board changes at Six Flags

ARLINGTON, Texas — Summer 2020 brought some changes to park management and the board of directors at **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.**

**Don McCoy** has been named park president of **Six Flags Magic Mountain** and **Hurricane Harbor** in Valencia, California, and **Six Flags Hurricane Harbor** in Phoenix. McCoy is a 35-year Six Flags veteran who most recently served as park president of **Six Flags Discovery Kingdom** in Vallejo, California, and **Six Flags Hurricane Harbor** in nearby Concord. He also previously served as park president of **The Great Escape** and **Hurricane Harbor**, a two-park Six Flags property in Lake George, New York.

McCoy succeeds **Neal Thurman**, who has left Six Flags to join **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** as president of **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay**, replacing Stewart Clark (see related Clark announcement, this page). Thurman's 25 years with the company included previous park president roles at **Six Flags Great Adventure** in Jackson, New Jersey, and **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** in San Antonio. He took the Six Flags Magic Mountain leadership position in 2018.

Six Flags has also appointed **Esi Eggleston Bracey** and **Enrique Ramirez Mena** to its board of directors, expanding board membership to nine.

Bracey is executive vice president and CEO of North America beauty and personal care at **Unilever, PLC**, a multinational consumer goods company. She was appointed president designee of consumer beauty at **Coty, Inc.**, a global beauty company, in 2015, and served as president from 2016-17. She previously served as senior vice president of global cosmetics at **The Procter & Gamble Co.**

Mena serves as managing director/general manager of **Pizza Hut Latin America and Iberia**, a division of global restaurant operator **Yum! Brands, Inc.** From 2014-20, he served as CFO of **Pizza Hut Global**. He has held roles of increasing responsibility in finance and strategic development at Pizza Hut since 2010.



McCoy



Thurman



Bracey



Mena

## OBITUARIES

## Alfeo Moser, inventor/founder, Moser's Rides

OSTIGLIA, Italy — Alfeo Moser, who founded Moser's Rides with his three sons, passed away Aug. 11. He was 75.

Moser's passion for technology was sparked during his military service. Joining the Italian Navy at age 16, he served as radar manager aboard the **Impavido**, a guided-missile destroyer. At age 24, he joined his father-in-law in a small ride manufacturing company, to become known as **Soriano & Moser**, in the Po Valley.

Moser established Moser's Rides with three of his four children in 1997. The company has created rides for major clients and parks around the world, such as **Mall of America** in Minnesota, **Tivoliand** in Denmark and **Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi**. Among the company's notable products are **Mäch Tower** (Spinning Drop Tower) at **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** in Virginia; **Fandango** (Sidewinder) at **Knoebels Amusement Resort** in Elysburg, Pennsylvania; and **Pacific Plunge** (Drop Tower) at **Pacific Park** in Santa Monica, California. Moser's **La Perla**, a 55-meter-tall Ferris wheel in **Guayaquil**, Ecuador, has been described as the largest such ride in Latin America.

Moser held several patents for his industry inventions. Although his company created big things, he remained humble, often saying: "We are small artisans."



Moser

## Jeff Schilling, founder/owner, Creative Works

MOORESVILLE, Ind. — Jeff Schilling, founder and co-owner of immersive attractions supplier **Creative Works**, died July 26 after battling cancer.

Schilling founded **Creative Works** in 1997 while working in the laser tag industry. Schilling saw an opportunity to improve laser tag arenas — transforming them into movie-style sets where guests could become the heroes of their own journey. This gave rise to the company's slogan: "The Wow Effect."

Under Schilling's leadership, **Creative Works** expanded its product line to include attractions such as indoor mini golf, escape rooms, virtual reality and esports. He worked with thousands of business owners all over the globe.

Schilling believed in mentoring others and empowering operators through education. In 2011, he started the **LaserTag360** program, now **Amusement 360**. It comprised events designed to bring the industry's best together to share tools for success. This past June, he was presented with the **Laser Tag Museum's Industry Innovator Award**.

Schilling's legacy continues through his wife, Kimberly, a co-owner of **Creative Works**, and a charity the couple started during his final days. Details of the charity are to be announced.



Schilling

## Dominic Vivona, Sr., Amusements of America

MT. PLEASANT, S.C. — Dominic Vivona, Sr., a founder of **Amusements of America**, passed away Aug. 4 due to complications from COVID-19. He was 88.

Born in Newark, New Jersey, Vivona graduated from **Duke University** in 1954. He joined his four brothers, Morris, John, Sebastian and Philip, in their traveling carnival business. Initially called **The Vivona Brothers Combined Shows**, the family business began with the purchase of a celebrated Ferris wheel from the 1939 World's Fair New York City.

The brothers strove for a national image and rebranded as **Amusements of America**. From the 1950s onward, it grew into one of North America's largest carnivals. The company relocated from New Jersey to Miami in the early 1970s.

A much-honored industry leader, Dominic Vivona led the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association** as chairman in 1994. He was a member of **Miami Showmen's Assn.**, **New York Showmen's Assn.**, **Showmen's League of America** and **Tampa Showmen's Assn.** He also received the **New Jersey Amusement Association Lifetime Achievement Award** on behalf of his family.

Vivona is survived by his wife, **Helena McKay-Vivona**, and children, **Dominic Jr.**, **Pia Dobos**, **Marco** and **Dario**; as well as his stepchildren, **Frederick McKay, Jr.**, and **Beth McKay Fisher**. He is also survived by his brother, **Philip**. He was preceded in death by his first wife, **Maddalena**, with whom he shared life for 33 years.



Vivona



# Intamin co-founder Robert Spieldiener dies at 92, leaves legacy

WOLLERAU, Switzerland — Robert Spieldiener, one of three men who co-founded Intamin Amusement Rides in 1967, passed away Aug. 8. He was 92.

A statement signed by the company's governing board, management and employees said: "[Spieldiener's] large commitment and knowledge was the cornerstone of the company. His entrepreneurial dedication and passion for the leisure industry will remain an example for us. We will remember him honorably, and our condolences go out to the family."

Spieldiener was the last surviving Intamin co-founder. His brother, Reinhold, passed in 2007, and their associate Alfons "Ali" Saiko died earlier this year. Reinhold's son, Patrick, currently serves as the company's CEO.

The founding trio and their growing, evolving company built a legacy of rides — from simple family rides such as Bounty swinging ships, boat tows, Flying Dutchman swing rides and Drunken Barrels to the world's tallest roller coasters and countless rapids rides.

As the theme park business boomed in the U.S. and around



**Robert Spieldiener**

the world in the late 1960s and 1970s, Intamin helped the industry innovate new ideas and attractions. Parachute and freefall rides gave parks high-profile thrills, while a complement of flumes, rapids rides and shoot-the-chutes provided popular splashing fun that became synonymous with a day in the park.

Harold Hudson, former executive vice president of engineering and development with Six Flags, told *Amusement Today* that the Spieldiener brothers paved the way for today's cutting-edge attractions.

"It was my honor to work with Robert and Reinhold to develop some of the most

innovative rides built in the 1980s and '90s," Hudson said. "Robert was a smart businessman, but he was even smarter technically. In all the years I worked with Intamin, whenever there was a design challenge, Robert was usually the one who came up with the solution. He was truly gifted, and we are lucky he chose this industry in which to work."

Six Flags was an early partner with Intamin, buying the company's first rides for Six Flags Over Texas. As the theme park chain grew, it returned to Intamin for flat rides, coasters and more.

"His contributions to the amusement park industry were many. He was a very gentle man. I remember him being a very honest and forthright person. If I called him with a question about something, I would always receive a prompt, intelligent and polite reply. It may not have been what I always wanted to hear, but I knew he was always being honest with me," said Errol McKoy, former Six Flags GM and the president of the State Fair of Texas. "I remember [former Six Flags engineer] Fred Bigler telling me one time that he thought



**Pillars of Intamin (from left): co-founder Reinhold Spieldiener, co-founder Robert Spieldiener, current CEO Patrick Spieldiener (Reinhold's son) and co-founder Ali Saiko. COURTESY INTAMIN**

Robert was one of the smartest individuals he had ever known, and coming from Fred, that was quite a compliment.

"May God bless Robert Spieldiener for being part of one of the most incredible companies both then and now, who have helped bring so much happiness to families from all over the world with their Incredible rides," McKoy added.

With Intamin, the Spieldieners "built one of the world's most successful amuse-

ment ride companies by partnering with people like Anton Schwarzkopf, Werner Stengel, Giovanola and Waagner Biro in their company's infancy," Hudson said. "Through their leadership, Intamin created beyond-cutting-edge rides and broke records every year.

"Robert was able to visualize technical challenges and fostered many innovations. His leadership and innovative philosophy influences Intamin today."

—Tim Baldwin



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# SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Central Florida opens haunted driving experiences — page 42 / Six Flags presents Halloweenfest — page 44

## Mobile Wallet system from Embed combines safety and efficiency

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

With the onset of the health crisis, the realization of countless touch surfaces became an alarming situation. Every business and facility became aware of a need to react.

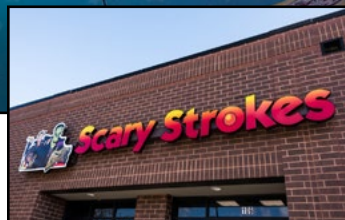
In the FEC market, **Embed** provided solutions with its Mobile Wallet system.

"Contactless. It's not just about cashless anymore, everything is about 'low-touch' and contactless," said **Renee Welsh**, CEO, Embed. "In fact, the pandemic has forced the world to enter the 'Low-touch Economy.' Every individual on the planet is more conscious about hygiene than ever before. 82% of people view contactless and low-touch as the safest way to pay, which is why you've seen a dramatic spike in Mobile Payments using the Mobile Wallet. Consumers have peace of mind and feel more secure keeping their mobile phones clean and hands sanitized than trusting a surface area has been cleaned by a business with high foot traffic. Mobile usage, including payments, is an immutable force around the globe."

An advantage of Mobile Wallet is that no dedicated app download is required. "This is usually a barrier to entry," added Welsh. "No one wants to download an app and set it up."

Greater convenience is another plus. Guests can reload their virtual game cards that sit in the mobile wallet anytime, anywhere, without leaving the game. This can even be accomplished from home, from the car or anywhere.

Turning three years old this month, **Scary Strokes** (Waldorf, Maryland) is an 11,300-square-foot indoor facility, half of which is a blacklight golf course from which the FEC gets its name. The facility boasts an Omni Arena and an arcade featuring state-



of-the-art games. Scary Strokes recently adopted the Mobile Wallet system.

"We have a history of being with Embed," said **Doug Roth**, CEO, Scary Strokes. "They've been great to work with; we've liked their forward-thinking innovations. During the three months of shutdown, we had time to rethink how we were going to reopen. We thought about people coming to our facility. Embed was offering this new Mobile Wallet. [Customers] didn't have to go to the arcade card kiosks or the front desk. Guests didn't have to do any physical transactions or push any buttons at all. They did everything from the personal comfort of their own cell phone."

Welsh noted, "Feedback from operators has been great. Mobile Wallet reduces significant operating costs to operators — no coins, tickets, game cards to process and maintain, zero cost of downtime or maintenance due to ticket or coin jams."

"They could manage it right from the cell phone," Roth told

Games can be activated without cards by customers' personal phones (above left). Tickets "won" are stored on the Mobile Wallet, further reducing any touch points for winners and staff who redeem prizes (above right). Scary Strokes (inset), named for its haunted-themed mini golf, has recently adopted the Mobile Wallet system. COURTESY SCARY STROKES



*Amusement Today*. "Groups can reload it right from the phone, and better yet, they can then activate the games with the cell phone. They don't even have to swipe the card. The icing on the cake is that it keeps track of their tickets won. When they come up to redeem their prizes, they simply scan the bar code on their phone. Having that 100% non-touch solution for us was a no brainer."

Roth noted that small children and young teens who didn't own phones can still use the traditional cards with the Mobile Wallet system. Parents who have those family cards logged onto their phones can still reload remotely without using any kiosks as well.

By reducing numerous touch points, Scary Strokes could concentrate on remaining ones such as golf clubs and balls sanitized after each game and arcade game controls. The FEC also made disposable gloves available and hand sanitizer stations are positioned throughout. Social distancing is enforced,

and masks are required.

"Consumers like the unparalleled operational efficiency: no lines at the kiosk (requiring social distancing and blocking consumer traffic), reload from anywhere, anytime. No more lost game cards. This empowers the consumer to keep track of their balance and drives return visits," said Welsh. "There is also 100% transparent spend and game data for the FEC owner, who can use that data to offer promotions that drive return visits."

Embed also points out a community benefit: COVID Tracking. If the operator is alerted that a patron who visited its business has COVID, the operator is able to identify what games the person played at what time, and who played it afterwards, for tracking and tracing purposes and is able to contact consumers. "This is a very powerful measure intended to keep employees, customers and the community safe. And there's a huge peace of mind knowing you have that capability at your fingertips," said Welsh.

Embed finds an update to this safer system to be a wise business decision.

"It's simple, if you replace your personal hardware, like your mobile phone, every three years, then surely your business software should be refreshed every once in a while to remain relevant to customers," said Welsh.

"Given the current pandemic climate, people are chronically worried about keeping their families COVID-free," she said. "No one is going to a place they deem unsafe; they need to be reassured with the measures the operator takes to keep their employees, consumers and community safe. They don't want to handle dirty cash and coins that have been touched by hundreds of strangers or wait in lines to make withdrawals or top up their game card. A simple Google Search yields the ongoing research and data supporting these facts. And the good news is that we're in this together. And together we will get through this."

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# Central Florida conjures up safe, spooky fun despite limitations

AT: David Fake  
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — Halloween and haunted attraction enthusiasts were understandably disappointed when Universal Studios Florida and Disney's Magic Kingdom announced their annual separate-ticket events, Halloween Horror Nights and Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party, were yet additional victims of the COVID-19 axe. Luckily, some creatives who were formerly behind such events refused to allow the pandemic to keep the high-end haunts dead and buried. Like zombies, these creatives came back from the virtual dead with new ideas and exciting ways to keep the spooky fun alive.

Amid their frustration over limitations and restrictions of the pandemic and disappointment over the cancellation of Orlando's signature haunt events, veterans of Disney Imagineering and Entertainment, as well as Universal Creative and Entertainment teams saw an opportunity that may have only been made possible as a result of the pandemic: Drive-thru haunted attractions. Out



The Haunted Road offers unexpected scares in a completely drive-thru Halloween experience. COURTESY THE HAUNTED ROAD

of this irony, two separate and independent haunted attractions utilizing this concept were announced for the Central Florida area.

The Haunted Road combines theatrical storytelling, horrifying creatures, and unexpected scares in a completely drive-thru Halloween experience. Guests will be driving and parking their vehicles at each scene, so they are not able to escape the horror that lurks around every corner. The spine-tingling action will come to life thanks to hundreds of live performers, set pieces, props, lighting, sound, and visual effects to place guests in the center of an original storyline. The immer-

sive journey reveals an untold story of Rapunzel, as she ventures into a world of disarray filled with twisted creatures, bloodcurdling encounters and screams for anyone who dares to take a drive down the road.

The attraction cleverly uses the Hashtag, #SavingHalloween, throughout their social media posts. "We knew it was the perfect time to develop a unique Halloween experience so everyone can enjoy a dose of horror this upcoming Halloween season, from the comfort of their car," said Jessica Mariko, executive producer and creative princi-

▶ See HAUNTS, page 43



Scream n' Stream pays homage to the slasher movie genre on its 1.25-mile-long fright course. COURTESY SCREAM N' STREAM



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## ►HAUNTS

Continued from page 42

pal of The Haunted Road and former show producer at several of Orlando's major theme parks. Mariko was also the creative mind behind another of Orlando's favorite theatrical experiences, **DRIP**, a combination of dance and paint, that grew out of a production at the Orlando Fringe Festival.

The event is recommended for guests ages 13 and up. On November 6 and 7, the team behind the event is dialing up the intensity for two nights of The Haunted Road: "Unrestricted," featuring even more gore and horror for guests 18 and up.

The Haunted road runs select nights Sept. 25-Nov. 7. Admission prices begin at \$15 per person. A "Beyond the Road" upgrade is available for \$79 per vehicle, and includes priority viewing location at each scene, access to an exclusive bonus scene, and a digital photo taken during the experience. TheHauntedRoad.com

**Scream n' Stream** is a 1.25-mile-long montage of 10 scary show-scenes that tells a story paying homage to the 90s-style slasher flicks and centers around several randy teens who, while exploring an abandoned drive-in movie theater,



The Haunted Road and Scream n' Stream both offer socially distanced trick-or-treating events for kids in the daylight hours. COURTESY SCREAM N' STREAM

find themselves in a fight for their lives against a cannibalistic cult which has staked their claim on the drive-in and now the teens. The attraction is located on the grounds of a former RV park amid a literal swamp adjacent to Boggy Creek.

The attraction is the result of cumulative efforts of production manager, **Chris Louis**, and several former colleagues including scenic designers and make-up artists. Louis served as a Halloween Horror Nights production manager from 2006 through 2009.

Luis explained that a big motivation behind the attraction was to give opportunities to Orlando's unemployed creatives who have been furloughed or permanently laid off from their roles at the theme parks and attractions. He emphasized his strong commitment to his cast and crew, all of whom are paid talent except for several scenic interns, who are receiving school credit and expenses. "We want people to be invested in what they're doing with us. We need to have

perfection in some areas, and that perfection has to translate to safety and security for everyone involved," he said.

Scream n' Stream runs weekends from Sept. 25 through Oct. 31. Admission costs \$53-\$69 per vehicle (maximum eight occupants). ScreamnStream.com

Both attractions stress their commitment to safety. Social distancing and other numerous safety measures will be in effect to ensure maximum safety and fun for guests and performers. Guests are expected to remain

in their vehicles for the duration of the route during the event and will be monitored by traffic directors. Face masks (of the non-monster variety) are required for all guests.

Additionally, both attractions also offer kid-friendly events during daylight hours where the course is transformed into a socially distanced trick-or-treat route where treats are dispersed into vehicles via long tubes preventing any contact between the staff and the guests.

While these new attractions help fill the void left by the cancellation of Universal and Disney's events, it does not mean that these parks are not still offering alternative Halloween activities and seasonal merchandise. Disney will offer special Halloween-themed cavalcades of costumed characters, and Universal announced that it would open select haunted houses from Halloween Horror Nights to day guests at no extra charge, as construction of the houses were completed earlier this year prior to the decision to cancel the event. In addition, both parks are inviting guests to come in-costume to socially distanced trick-or-treat days and are also offering merchandise from their respective events at special Halloween event boutique shops.

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# Six Flags rethinks Halloween in the COVID era with HallowFest

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ARLINGTON, Texas — News outlets are rife with reports of Halloween events and haunted attractions remaining shuttered in numerous cities this year. The hashtag #saveHalloween made its rounds when Los Angeles briefly banned trick-or-treating. Caught up in this maelstrom is the theme park industry as it navigates its way through ongoing events into what is one of its most lucrative seasons.

Six Flags theme parks have ramped up the fear in years past with the chain's Fright Fest. 2020 looks different. While Halloween is still alive and well at the parks, the seasonal event has changed. For this year, it has been reimagined as HallowFest. Knowing it can't provide all the up-close scares of the traditional event, HallowFest addresses the challenges in the age of social distancing.

"Our annual Fright Fest celebration is one of the most anticipated Halloween events of the season. Given the current environment, we are taking special precautions this year and offering our guests a version that is still scary, provides lots of thrilling rides and Halloween fun, and most importantly, is safe for our guests and team members," said Six Flags President and CEO Mike Spanos. "We will operate HallowFest the same way we have operated our parks all summer, with daily temperature checks and face masks required for guests and team members prior to



entry, social distancing and enhanced sanitization measures."

"In any event you are planning, you process what the proper protocols are for safely executing those efforts — social distancing and sanitization for example. You go through that punch list and plan things out from that standpoint," said Operations Director Chris Baker, Six Flags Over Texas. "We really wanted a Halloween event, and we are at a point in society where people are wanting to get that Halloween fix, but events and trick-or-treating are likely to be canceled or significantly decreased this fall. We have a great outdoor park environment that lets us do a Halloween overlay with decorations and then choreograph experiences within that. It will be different than that of the past, but I think it will be a lot of fun and give guests an opportu-



Six Flags Over Texas reimagines its décor with new approaches for HallowFest. All Halloween characters will be wearing masks (inset), just as guests and team members do.

AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY SIX FLAGS

nity to get outside and enjoy the Halloween season."

Masks are expected to be worn by all visitors to the park, as well as team members. "We follow all the CDC guidelines," Baker confirms.

"When you get into how characters perform, we call them more 'high-profile characters' more than scare actors [this year]," he said. "Traditional scares in the past have been a little more 'close proximity.' The characters we've developed for this year's event will still be scary, but the scares will come more from their appearance and actions versus initiating up close scares. That's a difference."

Scare Zones also have a route for people to go around if they don't want to enter that experience.

When asked if this year's event was toned down in the era of COVID, Sharon Parker, communications manager, Six Flags Over Texas, said, "From my perspective, having a seven-year-old wanting to have that Halloween experience, knowing it is toned down, it's encouraging. This will be our [family] option this year. The park has been pushing for that balance between family friendly fun and that thrill/scare elements the company has been wanting. So, this is kind of that year for those two to marry and see how that can work."

Mystic Acres will be a fun trick-or-treat trail the park has never done. Smaller children may wear costumes.

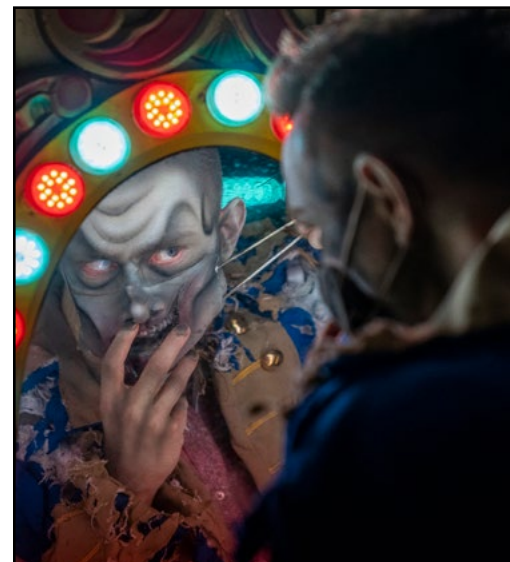
In all Six Flags parks offering HallowFest, the

motto is "Thrills by Day, Chills by Night." In year's past, Fright Fest spared no prisoners once evening hours approached. HallowFest gives families options.

Baker noted that representatives from all parks collaborate as a committee to focus on Halloween each year, and this year that review proved to be even more helpful, as did guest surveys expressing their concerns. With a commonality of safety protocols, each Six Flags park is given the freedom to throw its own creative spin on the event.

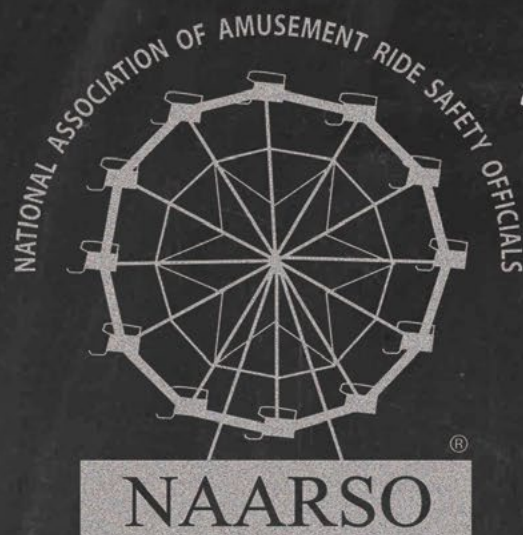
"Having to think outside the box without a doubt encourages creativity. It changes everything," said Matt Hughey, operations

► See SIX FLAGS, page 46



Six Flags Great Adventure's special effects supervisor Andrea Kovalik showcases her own designs with her makeup and mask (above left). SteamPunkin provides new flair at Fiesta Texas to a recently rethemed area (above middle). Makeup ingeniously goes on the mask to create a seamless appearance on the actor (above right). COURTESY SIX FLAGS





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In some cases, masks are paired to ensure safety (above left). COURTESY SIX FLAGS



## ►SIX FLAGS

Continued from page 44

manager, Six Flags Over Texas. "With what we're doing, it's such a breath of fresh air. There's nothing that was in place last year that is in place this year. It's a completely new setup. We're excited about it. It's going to be a great experience both for families and those that need to 'get their scary on' as well."

Six Flags Fiesta Texas in San Antonio, a park known

for award-winning shows, hasn't lost sight of its entertainment. Using two outdoor venues, the park is featuring all-new entertainment: "Wicked Mixx Vol. 1" and "Terror at Teatro." In addition to that, on nights that the park is open into dark, a fireworks and multi-media Frightful Finale will take place on the park's grand lawn with ample social distancing.

"One of the ways of keeping everyone safe is courtesy to the work ethic of our performance team — we'll

just do more shows, which allows us to reduce the theater capacity and maintain social distancing between small groups and families," said Park President **Jeffrey Siebert**. "After the shows, guests will exit row by row to ensure that the social distancing can be maintained. We also blocked shows to make sure the cast is also safe."

Siebert is also excited that one of the park event's features is the flair the culinary team is initiating to roll out an entire fall menu

throughout the park.

New Jersey's **Six Flags Great Adventure** is continuing to offer haunted mazes, but outdoors with new safety protocols.

"We have redesigned our outdoor mazes to accommodate social distancing between the actors and guests and added plexiglass to separate them in some locations," said **Kristen Fitzgerald**, communications manager. "Our trick-or-treat trail was redesigned to accommodate social distancing, and indi-

vidually wrapped, bagged candy reduces contact."

Great Adventure is also offering an indoor haunted house, *Reflections of the Dead*. In this case, the attraction is done without scare actors, but instead uses a labyrinth of mirrors and special effects to add mystery.

In the park's Scare Zones, Fitzgerald is particularly excited about the fusion of safety and the unnerving.

"We have always been extremely proud of the work done by our special effects team, and the intricate makeup and prosthetics they produce. This year, our performers are required to wear masks," she told *Amusement Today*. "We didn't want to lose the high-quality look of the airbrush makeup and hand painting. In response, our special effects supervisor has developed incredible, new latex masks that blend seamlessly with surgical masks. With their intricate hand painting, it's nearly impossible to tell that the performers are wearing latex masks. Each performer has his or her own latex mask, and it's regularly sanitized. Surgical masks are simply discarded after use."

Seven Six Flags parks are open for Halloweenfest. Each event started in varying weeks in September and continues weekends through November 1. The park's policy of requiring reservations is still in place.

"We talk about how these events change," Baker said. "But really that's what makes Six Flags fun with these festivals and events. It's an ever-changing environment. As much as we can, we want to reinvent those elements. Some of that has been driven by masks and the protection protocols, but I think it really does push us on creativity."

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### AIMS Safety Seminar goes virtual in 2021

**AIMS International**, the unmatched leader in amusement safety education, has made the decision to take its 27th annual AIMS International Safety Seminar 100% virtual in 2021. From the comfort and safety of their home or office, attendees will learn from world-class speakers, veteran trainers and the industry's top professionals sharing their expertise in a virtual classroom setting, covering hundreds of different topics. The event will occur during the same week that the in-person seminar was originally planned: January 10 – 15, 2021.

Although it is disappointing that this year's AIMS International Safety Seminar will not be held in person, the AIMS staff and board of directors feel it is the safest and most cost effective way to deliver safety education to the many operators, maintenance technicians and inspectors around the world who need it. Attendees will discover the same stellar level of quality and variety the AIMS International Safety

Seminar is known for, with state-of-the-art courses taught by experts in the fields of maintenance, operations, ride inspection, aquatics, leadership and more — delivered virtually in live and on demand format.

The AIMS board and staff deliberated long and hard about the decision to pivot from an in-person to fully virtual safety seminar in 2021. They considered all options and weighed the pros and cons of each. In the end, they listened to their constituents who made it clear that safety concerns and budgetary restrictions have made it impossible to travel for any reason, including education and training. This left only one clear choice: make the AIMS International Safety Seminar accessible to everyone by making it virtual. By doing this, attendees will have the freedom to access the educational content they need and have the opportunity to interact with presenters in an on-line platform. This decision by no means indicates a permanent

end to in-person seminars. AIMS plans to return to Galveston in January of 2022 and will continue to offer a variety of in-person and virtual educational opportunities as well as certifications and CEUs for years to come.

Additionally, brand new courses, including a new aquatics curriculum presented by Ellis and Associates, will be available to attendees of the virtual AIMS International Safety Seminar. The response to the Call for Presentations has been overwhelming and AIMS is grateful to the many professionals and experts who have submitted presentation proposals for volunteering to share their knowledge and expertise with their amusement industry colleagues. Anyone interested in submitting a presentation proposal may do so by visiting [aimsintl.org/get-involved/be-an-instructor](http://aimsintl.org/get-involved/be-an-instructor). The submission deadline is October 15, 2020.

The winner of the AIMS International Safety Award will also

be announced at the upcoming 2021 AIMS International Safety Seminar. This award is presented annually to the individual or organization that demonstrates leadership, innovation, and foresight in improving safety in the amusement industry. With safety as the industry's #1 concern for both guests and employees, efforts in improving safety are shown in many forms: the design and implementation of new products and technology, the development of safety education programs and training, and by exemplary leadership in influencing others. The deadline for nominations is Friday, December 4, 2020. Anyone wishing to nominate a deserving industry professional can find the nomination form at: [aimsintl.org/about/awards](http://aimsintl.org/about/awards).

Additional details of the 2021 Virtual Safety Seminar, including registration, pricing and schedules will be released in October. Please visit [aimsintl.org](http://aimsintl.org) for more information and updates.

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# OABA & NAARSO partner to provide affordable online training platform

WEST SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — The Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA) and the National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO) have partnered to provide the amusement industry with an extremely affordable online training platform that includes NAARSO accredited courses.

Since 2017, OABA, in partnership with Learning Zen, has been providing our members with this in-depth educational online training platform to instill the industry's common goals of safety and operational excellence. "Our partnership with NAARSO will expand the capabilities and content for those who wish to train all their employees with free NAARSO content that can also be upgraded for an additional fee to obtain CEU credits online," said Greg Chiecko, president and CEO of the OABA.

For as little as \$25 per student, members can have unlimited access to more than 40 online courses, including NAARSO accredited courses. OABA is committed to developing and growing VOLT's diverse and bilingual course offerings and continues to add course content on a monthly basis including courses that count toward NAARSO credit and OSHA requirements.

VOLT participants can receive 32 hours of NAARSO accredited training for only \$574 (including CEU fee from Old Dominion University). VOLT fees are almost 50% less than other industry online platforms. In addition, carnivals and industry professionals can take control to organize, administer, and track milestones, measure growth, log certifications, and monitor the overall completion rates of the entire training process for each employee, all within the VOLT platform.

"Together we pledged to create the most deliverable and affordable training in the marketplace. Our goal is to put a NAARSO certification in the pocket of everyone who touches an amusement ride," said Michael Wood, president of NAARSO.

VOLT is the most affordable online training available for full time or seasonal employees. For more information or to sign up, visit [oaba.org/volt](http://oaba.org/volt) or call (413) 313-3763.

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## BREAKING NEWS

# Yullbe from MackNeXT, VR Coaster offers next-level immersive experience

RUST, Germany — The new building to the right of the four-star hotel Krønassår, and just across from Europa-Park's Rulantica waterworld looks quite inconspicuous from the outside. It is hard to imagine that an entire universe of possibilities lies within.

The participants experience first-hand what it is like to push the boundaries of physics and wield supernatural abilities. Yullbe is not a game, it is a completely new kind of sensory experience that goes beyond the limits of imagination.

As the world's first VR experience of this kind, up to 32 users can simultaneously immerse themselves in the infinite world of Yullbe and "Mission: Rulantica." This attraction by MackNeXT and VR Coaster offers what appears to be an entire cosmos of possibilities across an area of 600 square meters.

In the Full Body Tracking Free Roaming VR Experience, participants can move freely, and perceive themselves and up to seven of their fellow players completely in the virtual space. Behind this is a complex tracking technology, which was developed through close cooperation with specialist in motion capture Vicon. Haptic elements make the VR experience even more



Thomas Wagner, managing director of VR Coaster (left), and Michael Mack, managing partner of Europa-Park and founder of MackNeXT (right), have jointly realized the unique Yullbe project. COURTESY EUROPA-PARK

lively and lead to a new level of immersion. The result is a world's first: a unique interplay that transforms fantastic dreams and visionary ideas into state-of-the-art entertainment.

After successfully checking in, each visitor is equipped with a backpack PC, complete with trackers and VR helmet, preparing them for the next 30 minutes of the "Mission: Rulantica." From this point onward, they continue their adventure in the body of a virtual avatar. The pioneers of the Adventure Club of Europe, Bartholomeus van Robbemond and Myra, send up to eight newcomers on a

brehtaking mission together to Rulantica.

Beginning in October, Yullbe offers a standout experience of terror. During the 10-minute "Horror Nights – Traumatica" experience, guests will find themselves thrilled.

This special kind of thrill is not for the faint of heart and guests must be over 18 years of age. Those players who survive the VR horror and want to keep up the adrenaline will get the ultimate traumatic experience on selected weekends with the live extension, featuring a scare zone, horror actors and other scary surprises.

•Yullbe.com

## Beyond The Lens! Branson opens first 40-seat Flyride attraction

BRANSON, Mo. — SimEx-Iwerks Entertainment announced that Beyond the Lens of Branson, Missouri, opened its FlyRide attraction. This is the second FlyRide attraction that SimEx-Iwerks has opened in September.

FlyRide is a fully immersive ride that allows passengers to experience the authentic and thrilling feeling of flying through wind, mist, scents and space on exciting journeys. Riders are fully immersed in the action within a huge, curved four-story-high screen.

"This is the first attraction of its kind in the world," said Robin Turner of Frontpage Attractions, parent company of Beyond The Lens. "Our partnership with SimEx-Iwerks Entertainment and MacGillivray Freeman Films has resulted in us delivering a truly world-class experience. We are confident all visitors to Branson will be amazed and delighted by FlyRide."

Fly America, the attraction's signature film, was created and produced by SimEx-Iwerks and MacGillivray Freeman Films in close collaboration with Frontpage Attractions. Passengers soar above more than 20 of America's most awe-inspiring national landmarks giving them a unique flight experience.



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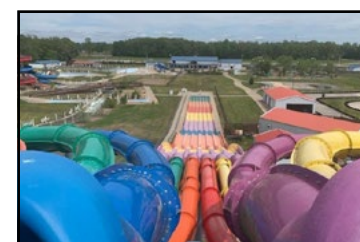
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## Z-MAX

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[zamperla.com](http://zamperla.com)

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